



State of New Jersey

## **BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**June 25, 2025**

**(Wednesday)**

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on June 19, 2025.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by giving written notice of the time, date, location and to the extent known the agenda of this meeting. At least 48-hours in advance this notice has been posted on the third floor, Riverview Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey; mailed to the Newark Star Ledger; the Camden Courier Post; the Trenton Times and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State.

President Bob Blew called the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture to order at 1:05 pm. Board members in attendance included President Bob Blew; Vice President Lisa Specca, Kurt Alstede, David DeFrango, John Hart, Stephen V. Lee, IV, Rick Gardner and Joel Viereck. The meeting was held at Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ.

Also in attendance were Secretary Wengryn; Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison; Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Chuck Roehr, Executive Director, SADC; Tameko Webster, Chris LaRegina, Nathan Schatz, Robert Vivian, William Connors, Shatima Murphy, Alyssa Pitt, Kaitlynn Dixon and Jeff Beach, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Beth Feehan, Zone 7; Meredith Taylor, Organic & Regenerative Farming Board; Jeff Burd, Mercer County Board of Agriculture; Allen Carter, Liz Jost, Ashley Kerr, and Al Murray, NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; Lindsay Carragher, Deputy Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, Julie Hawkins, NRCS; Bruce Eklund, State Statistician, and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by Joel Viereck, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2025 regular meeting. This meeting was rescheduled from May 28, 2025 due to the death of the Department's Public Information Officer Jeff Wolfe's funeral.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Beth Feehan, former Department Farm to School Coordinator, was on the call to express support for Senate Bill 4353 which directs the Department of Agriculture to establish "Urban Gardening Pilot Program"; appropriates \$100,000. A copy of her remarks will be included with the minutes.

Jeff Burd, Mercer County, asked if the Department has a master plan for going forward. President Blew commented that the Board in conjunction with the Department began this past winter work on a strategic plan for the future. He reported that there is still much work to be done but the work is underway. In addition, he noted that at the County level there is concern that DEP is taking too much control and are very concerned.

Vice President Specca read to the audience a Resolution from the State Board for Nathan Schatz who has been with the Department since 2021 providing Legal Services and he will be missed. Board members thanked and congratulated Nathan on his retirement.

## **REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Brian Schilling represented the College and reported on the following topics:

- New County Agent starting in Warren County on July 1. He thanked Board member Rick Gardner for serving on the selection Committee and for the support from the County. In addition, Dr. Raman Sharma started as the Salem County Agent on April 1. He reported that various other searches are currently under way.
- Karyn Malinowski, Director of the Equine Science Center, is retiring effective July 1. She has served with distinction for 47 years at the College. She will leave some very big shoes to fill.
- William F. Tate will become the 22<sup>nd</sup> President of Rutgers University on July 1. He comes from Louisiana State University.
- The Vegetable Team is working closely with the Vegetable Growers Association on the upcoming Convention and Trade Show.
- He noted that the recent issue regarding eminent domain, he lives in that town, and he noted that Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollings got in touch with the group and had a good conversation. He thanked other organizations that had also supported the cause.

## **REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)**

Lindsay Carragher, Farm Service Agency Deputy State Executive Director, reported that the Northern office covering Warren, Sussex, and Morris counties is now located at 350 Clark Drive, Suite 225, Mt Olive, New Jersey 07828. She also noted that although USDA Secretary Rollins has onboarded 34 Farm Service Agency Executive Directors, NJ is not among them.

### **Acreage Reporting**

FSA annually collects data relating to crops through crop acreage reports. If you want to participate in many USDA programs, including crop insurance, safety net, conservation, and disaster assistance programs, you must file timely acreage reports to remain eligible for program benefits. Filing an accurate and timely

acreage report for all crops, location, and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, may prevent the loss of benefits.

Producers with crop insurance must sign reports for both FSA and the insurance provider. A listing of acreage reporting deadlines is available on the NJ FSA homepage. Approved double cropping combinations are also present on the homepage for public viewing. Double-cropping is approved when two specific crops have the capability to be planted and carried to maturity for the intended use, as reported by the producer, on the same acreage within a crop year under normal growing conditions.

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) acreage reporting deadline for crops is the earlier of 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or the established acreage reporting deadline. For a specific crop, if harvest of a NAP crop is expected to begin on June 1, 2025, the NAP acreage reporting deadline would be May 16, 2025 (15 days prior to June 1). Contact your local office to set up an appointment for acreage reporting.

#### Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) – Notice of Loss

When a crop or planting is affected by a natural disaster, producers with NAP coverage must notify the FSA office where their farm records are maintained and complete Part B (the Notice of Loss portion) of form CCC-576, “Notice of Loss and Application for Payment.” This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the earlier of: A natural disaster occurrence; the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster; the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date. Producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent. The crops subject to this requirement will be listed in the NAP Basic Provisions.

#### Prevented Planting Deadline Extended for 2025 Spring Seeded Crops

FSA is extending the prevented planting crop reporting deadline for producers affected by spring flooding, excessive moisture, or qualifying drought. Producers who intended to plant this spring, but were unable due to weather conditions, now have until the acreage reporting deadline for the applicable crop being claimed as prevented planting. July 15 is a major deadline for most crops, but acreage reporting deadlines vary by county and by crop.

Producers need to report prevented planting acres to retain eligibility for FSA program benefits. Normally, the prevented planting reporting deadline is 15 calendar days after the final planting date for a crop as established by FSA and the Risk Management Agency (RMA). The prevented planting reporting deadline extension only applies to FSA and does not change any RMA crop insurance reporting deadline requirements.

The extension does not apply to crops covered by FSA’s Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Producers should check with their local FSA office regarding prevented planting provisions for NAP-covered crops. Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office as soon as possible to make an appointment to report prevented planting acres and submit their spring crop acreage report.

### Loss Adjusters

New Jersey FSA is seeking Loss Adjusters (LAs) for the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Loss Adjusters are required to have knowledge of field crops and specialty crops, as well as a thorough understanding and execution of crop adjusting guidelines and program provisions, as applicable to FSA programs. If interested, please contact Aly Dyson, NJ FSA Disaster Specialist, [Aly.Dyson@usda.gov](mailto:Aly.Dyson@usda.gov), with any questions.

### Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP)

As of Monday June 16<sup>th</sup>, New Jersey FSA has approved 505 ECAP applications and paid \$5,415,514 to New Jersey farmers. Nationally, FSA paid \$7.8 billion. There is a public facing dashboard if producers are interested in following ECAP signup.

The Farm Service Agency is issuing up to \$10 billion directly to agricultural producers through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) for the 2024 crop year, with an application period of March 19, 2025 through August 15, 2025.

Authorized by the American Relief Act 2025, these economic relief payments are based on planted and prevented planted crop acres for eligible commodities for the 2024 crop year.

Eligible producers must report 2024 crop year planted and prevented planted acres to FSA on an FSA-578. Producers may late-file for use in ECAP-only by the August 15, 2025, deadline. The payment limitation is \$125,000, with an option to increase it to \$250,000 if the applicant provides a CPA certification that 75% or greater of their average gross income in 2020, 2021 and 2022 came from farming, ranching or forestry activities.

### Farm Storage Facility Loan

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFLs) provide low-interest financing for producers to store, handle and/or transport eligible commodities they produce. This includes acquiring, constructing or upgrading new or used, portable or permanently affixed, on-farm storage and handling facilities, acquiring new or used storage and handling trucks, acquiring portable or permanently affixed storage and handling equipment.

### Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency offers loans to help farmers and ranchers get the financing they need to start, expand or maintain a family farm. Use the Loan Assistance Tool (<https://lat.fpac.usda.gov/>) to check your eligibility for FSA Loans, discover FSA loan types, learn about FSA Loan requirements, and walk through the easy-to-understand instructions when completing the forms.

## **REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU**

President Allen Carter represented the Farm Bureau and reported on the following topics:

- Reported on the Committee meetings scheduled to be on the Legislative calendar for tomorrow. It was noted that the farmland assessment was held.
- State and College budgets were discussed.
- Board member-elect Holly Sytsema is on the list for approval.

- As of July 1, Liz Thompson will be taking over as the new Executive Director of the Farm Bureau will be Liz Thompson.
- He noted that the Farm Bureau will have a presence at most upcoming County fairs.

### **REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)**

Bruce Eklund, State Statistician, reported the following:

- June 30 they will release the annual June acreage report for soybeans and corn.
- May 2 they released peaches, blueberries and cranberries. He noted that members need to open the PDF and scroll to find all the pertinent data for New Jersey.
- April 17 they released the national and State hemp report.
- July 16 the vegetable chemical use data will be released.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)**

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, reported the following:

- As of the last meeting, the FSA has requested additional Farm Bill funds for '25 for applications that had been preapproved or moved to approval. In addition, they received an additional \$6.5 million in Equip funds to fund 67 applications. They will be meeting with district conservationists to apprise them which applications that affects and how to move forward.
- For the CSP program they received \$940,000. to fund 35 additional applications with 22 of those being ag land applications and 13 are forestry applications.
- Planning for FY26 program sign up will begin in mid-July for many of their programs, giving producers more time to sign up before the October cutoff.

### **ORGANIC & REGENERATIVE FARMING BOARD**

Meredith Taylor reported on behalf of the Organic & Regenerative Farming Board that she was the newest member of the Board and reported that the survey that was taken by the new Board to collect information from growers that consider themselves potentially in the organic or regenerative farming space. In addition, they invited everyone to participate, including service providers. She reported that they are working to unpack the results of the study. Finally, she announced that a written report regarding the survey results is expected in the Fall.

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Secretary Wengryn thanked Nathan for his service to the Department. He noted that the Department, in conjunction with the Board, is working on an internal and external strategic plan. He noted that now that we have a Chief Financial Officer and a Chief of Staff and that there has been a lot of time spent working on getting some of the staff moved around for efficiency purposes. He noted that one of the main things we need to focus on is "what does agriculture look like in the next five years, ten years? He reported that he continues to recover from his recent health crisis and thanked all family and friends who helped him and reached out to him during his time away.

Chief of Staff Tameko Webster thanked the Board for their support of the Department during the Secretary's leave. She too thanked Nathan for his time and effort during his time at the Department. She noted that work on the strategic plan continues as we look to ensure the sustainability of our department, establishing short- and long-term goals for improvement while remaining both innovative and competitive to make our Department the best in the nation. She reported that Department staff are working to prepare materials for the new Board member orientation, scheduled for the mornings of August 27 and September 24. She reported that we are working on a new Department website and other happenings in the Office of the Secretary.

Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison thanked Nathan for his work for the Department. He will be attending the opening of the new NORWESCAP facility and Secretary Wengryn will be attending the SADC meeting. He reported that the Secretary recorded radio spots for the new Jersey Fresh campaign that is under way. He noted that the boardwalk events scheduled for blueberries, peaches and cherry tomatoes. In addition, he attended the NEASDA meeting in Mystic, Connecticut with Secretary Wengryn and reported that it was an excellent opportunity to talk with folks from other states and hear some of the same concerns that we have. On August 8, New Jersey will be hosting Summer in the Cities, Food Export event where there will be buyers from 21 countries coming in and we have 20 state food producers for value added products already signed up and are looking for another dozen producers, if you know of anyone that would have interest, please let us know. He reported that on June 6 there was a Legislative Tour of Monmouth County, legislators, their representatives and Governor Office staff attended, and it was an excellent opportunity for them to see first-hand some of the problems that producers are facing. Finally, he reported that the Department would be hosting NAAMO (North American Agricultural Marketing Officials) from July 20-24 and looks forward to hosting this group here in New Jersey.

Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition, reported on the Summer EBT press release. She reported that they have already distributed over 693,000 cards totaling over \$83 million in federal funds. The Summer EBT program gives a \$120 EBT card to each child who is eligible for free meals at school. To date, over 365,000 cards have been activated and almost \$24 million has been redeemed. In addition, she reported that the Summer Food Service Program is getting ready to start their Summer Feeding Program with 180 sponsors with more than 1,200 feeding sites. She also reported that two of the participating sites are in the rural non congregate option that USDA has provided for families to pick up meals up.

Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, reported that with regard to the cost share the Soil Conservation Committee and he has been working with Chuck Roohr to look at short term goals to provide technical assistance and Nathan Schatz has been very helpful with that issue. He reported that the Department has been working with Community Affairs with their Building Safety Week in Atlantic City where they have a round table discussion and we have been invited to participate in and discuss the Construction Code with the participants.

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, thanked Nathan for his help with advancing a number of animal health rules during his tenure. He reported that the number of HPAI cases has been going down across the nation and hopefully it will not come back. He reported that the USDA has announced a plan to combat the New World Screwworm's northward spread.

Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC, provided the members of the Board a copy of the newly released Next Gen Report which was a compilation of the work that the Next Gen staff did over the last year and was approved by the Committee at their March meeting and then provided to the Legislature as part of funding for those two staff members. He reported that they hope to implement some of the recommendations that were made. In addition, the Statewide Formula was published in the NJ Register on April 7 and became effective as of that date. There were eight applications at the April meeting, 11 at the May meeting and 19 for the June meeting tomorrow. So, things are moving in the right direction and that is very positive news.

Board member Joel Viereck asked about the letter that was sent regarding the Woolwich TDR issue to the Department and noted that their County Ag Development Board had sent a letter to the Attorney General regarding the issue and asked if the Board should also send a letter. Mr. Roohr reported that he had spoken to the Attorney General's office earlier that day and was told that they are moving as fast as they can.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, also thanked Nathan for the work that he has done for the Division of Plant Industry and that the first of three inspections of newly imported boxwood plants took place in late May. Program staff deployed 20 traps at selected nurseries throughout the state in May to monitor for the presence of Boxtree moth. All treatments on the 2025 LDD New Jersey Aerial Suppression Program were completed on June 3. A total of 5,022 acres of forested residential municipal and 3,733 acres of state lands were treated on the program in eight municipalities located in Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Morris, Passaic and Sussex Counties. Finally, he reported that work on the lab can hopefully begin soon as monies and plans are finalized.

Secretary Wengryn commented that this meeting will hopefully be the last Board meeting for Lisa Specca and Kurt Alstede (as long as both nominees are approved). He thanked them for their exceptional service to the State Board and the Department and that we will continue to lean on our former Board members as resources going forward.

#### **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

John Hart reported that he has been following the Legislative Appropriation bills and following the action of them. He noted concern about the eminent domain issue going on and noted that USDA Secretary Rollins stepped in to try to help with the cause. He noted that affordable housing seems to be an issue in many counties and noted that it has definitely become a problem in Mercer County.

David DeFrange reported that the farmland assessment issue had been a real challenge and a discussion. He noted that it was asked why the Office of the Food Security Advocate does not provide a report to the Board. In addition, the DEP Real rules continue to be a concern because Hunterdon County has many areas that can flood. Finally, he noted that the weather also continues to provide a challenge to all growers.

Kurt Alstede reported that he is still hopeful that Jersey Fresh will get some additional monies when the budget is passed. He noted that he has been a member of the Highlands Council for more than 20 years and noted that the original Master Plan has high standards for supporting agriculture and so they have

suggested to the Township that they provide a report on Ag Viability. He reported that the weather conditions have made it very difficult but noted that the overall tree and small fruit crops look good.

Rick Gardner congratulated fellow Warren County resident Liz Thompson on her new position at the Farm Bureau. He noted that at the hearing he attended they talked about the number of ash trees that are dying and what can be done. He reported that Warren County Board of Agriculture was in the process of updating their by-laws. He also announced that their annual Legislative Dinner would be held on September 25 and invited all to attend. Finally, he noted that the eminent domain is only to be used as a measure of last resort.

Joel Viereck reported that both Salem & Gloucester County Boards are on their summer recess and that many of the Board members have already discussed the topics he was going to bring up. The only thing that he really is concerned about is the Gloucester County TDR issue. He feels that the Board should consider sending a letter to the Attorney General.

He noted that during the meeting he saw a news alert that said there had been an explosion at the Seabrook Processing plant and that at this time no one is believed to have been hurt.

Stephen Lee reported to the Board that the DEP has decided to do pesticide inspections on farms and that he had heard that they had to get inspections done on every farm by the end of the month. He reported that he had participated in the interviews for the next class of the Ag Leadership Program and it is hoped that the names of the Class members would be released soon. He reported that it is great to have Secretary Wengryn back in the office and he noted that the team at the Department had really stepped up during his absence.

Vice President Specca echoed Steve's comments about the Department staff really stepping up to the plate while the Secretary was out of the office. She reported that the Department of Labor had stopped by to inspect their H2A housing and talk to their men. Everyone had to stop working and they had to produce a number of documents by the end of the week, and it really caused a lot of anxiety and all felt bullied. She noted that those in direct marketing are having a very challenging season due to the weather. She reported on a problem with animals and working with someone from the new Rowan Vet School on a new worm that is affecting livestock. She reported that Monmouth County Board of Ag is in recess for the summer and that Ocean County met and would like to get some sort of AG Management Practice which would give them Right to Farm protection for the recycling of shells.

President Blew commented that the weather conditions are a real struggle for all when the heat index is 121! He thanked Nathan for his work on behalf of the Department. He noted that he was very concerned about the Seabrook facility collapse as he has a lot of friends that work at that facility and they are part of his family's heritage. He reported that Cape May County Board of Ag hosted a Legislative Event, in conjunction with the Tourism Board, at Cape May Winery. He noted that he recently visited Fenway Park and it uses Kentucky Blue grass from New Jersey!

#### Grants Committee

Chairman Stephen Lee reported that the Grants Committee had met to review the Specialty Crop Block Grant applications on June 16, 2025 at the EcoComplex. The Committee worked diligently to go



through all of the applications that were eligible. He noted the extensive work done by Billy Connors from the Office of the Secretary in streamlining the work to be done by the Committee. It was noted that some additional information was required that was going to cause a delay in the final numbers.

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted to give authority to the Grants Committee to complete the process of awarding the monies available. A list of the awarded organizations will be included with the minutes.

Lisa Speca and Kurt Alstede recused from the vote.

#### Convention Committee

President Blew reported that he would taking over as Chair of the Convention Committee at this time. The remaining members include Stephen Lee, Kurt Alstede and John Hart. He noted that the Committee would be meeting soon with the Vegetable Growers Association on the upcoming State Agricultural Convention for 2026.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### Outstanding Young Farmer

The Board voted unanimously to approve the Outstanding Young Farmer as presented to the Board but did not disclose the name so that the selected applicant can be informed.

ON the MOTION of Kurt Alstede, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to approve the name presented to the Board.

Members of the Board asked who the judges for the Outstanding Young Program were. Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison reported that he was the OYF Program Coordinator and that he had staff members that were part of the judging panel for the award. There was some discussion about reviewing the format of how the OYF is selected.

#### Promotion Council Budgets & Nominations

##### NJ Cranberry Industry Advisory Council

ON the MOTION of David DeFrange, seconded by Lisa Specca, the Board voted to approve the Council budget as presented.

Stephen Lee recused from the vote.

##### NJ Sweet Potato Industry Advisory Council

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Stephen Lee, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Council budget as presented.

ON the MOTION of Kurt Alstede, seconded by Joel Viereck, the Board voted to delegate the authority to Secretary Wengryn to manage the council.

#### NJ Asparagus Industry Advisory Council

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by John Hart, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Council budget as presented. Joel Viereck recused from the vote.

#### NJ Apple Industry Advisory Council

ON the MOTION of David DeFrange, seconded by Stephen Lee, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Council budget as presented. Kurt Alstede recused from the vote.

NJ White Potato Industry Advisory Council

NJ Dairy Industry Advisory Council

NJ Poultry Industry Advisory Council

ON the MOTION of Lisa Specca, seconded by Stephen Lee, the Board voted unanimously to approve the rest of the packet as presented with the members of NJ Agricultural Council Members.

#### Commercial Fertilizer Values

Assistant Secretary Atchison reported that after the prior discussion on this topic and in discussion with other states, a unit equals 20lbs. – Nitrogen: \$14.47 per unit; Slowly released nitrogen: Water insoluble nitrogen: \$14.47 per unit; Coated available nitrogen: \$16.64 per unit; Available phosphoric acid: \$13.35 per unit; Soluble potash: \$9.74 per unit.

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted to approve the Commercial Fertilizer Values as presented. Stephen Lee abstained from the vote.

Kurt Alstede stated that he felt that it was very important for the Board to send a letter to the Governor; Assembly Speaker and Senate President asking for time to provide appropriate comment on the farmland assessment legislation. Board member Stephen Lee stated that we should table the idea for 30 days and have more time to discuss. He commented that the Department and Farm Bureau must be on the same page on this issue.

Liz Thompson said that the Farm Bureau has been very engaged on this issue from the very beginning. They have met with the Governor's Office staff on the issue.

Department staff representative Rob Vivian stated that he believes we should send the letter and keep the pressure on by having industry leaders reach out as well.

#### Urban Agriculture Policy Committee

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Rick Gardner, they voted to send a letter to the Attorney General's Office on the TDR issue.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

### MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, July 23, 2025 beginning at 1:00 pm at Centerton Nursery in Bridgeton.

### ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Joel Viereck, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 4:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward D. Wengryn