



NEWS

New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee

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Contact: Heidi Winzinger Heidi.Winzinger@ag.nj.gov

STATE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE APPROVES PRESERVATION OF TWO FARMS IN CAMDEN COUNTY

(TRENTON) – The New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), the Farmland Preservation arm that is in, but not of, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, approved the preservation of two farms in Camden County at its monthly meeting on Thursday, January 26th, 2023. The two farms, totaling approximately 93 acres, are the first to be preserved in Camden County since 2016 when the Pagano Farm was preserved.

The preservation of the Sleeter family farm in Gloucester Township, and Stella Farm in Winslow Township, is the result of long-term cooperation and planning with the County, Municipalities, and SADC and landowners committed to preserving their land in agriculture.

“The preservation of these Camden County farms is an example of how cooperation between state, county, and municipal agencies can make a long-term positive impact on a community,” said New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher, who is also the chair of the SADC. “These operations remaining as agricultural entities is another example of how this program is protecting New Jersey’s rich farmland.”

The Sleeter farm, owned and operated by the late Gerald Sleeter, his wife Carolyn Sleeter, and their son Kurt, will have just over 40 acres preserved. It is one of the oldest thoroughbred equine production farms in New Jersey. Family-owned and operated since 1879, its operation includes breeding, raising, and pasturing horses, many of whom have been top performers at Monmouth Park.

“Sleeter Farm has been a priceless asset for our community for generations and nothing makes me happier to think that this site will be enjoyed for decades to come and continue to be an operational farm for perpetuity through this important state program,” Gloucester Township Mayor David Mayer said. “Ensuring that we have open space and farms is what makes the Township a special place to live and gives it unique character that our residents have come to cherish. I want to thank the state for the role it played in securing the development rights to the farm, and I want to thank the Sleeter family for their commitment to Gloucester Township.”

The Stella Farms parcel, owned and operated by Ed and Barbara Stella, will add an additional 53 acres of preserved land to their existing farmland holdings. The farm was established in 1921 and is widely known for its sweet corn, but also grows and sells a variety of vegetables throughout the growing season. The farm is located in the Pinelands rural development area, a transitional zone that balances environmental and development values located between conservation and growth areas. The Stella’s farm is approximately 121 acres overall, on multiple parcels in the area.

“The residents and visitors of New Jersey all know and love Sleeter and Stella Farms. These farms are a huge asset to our county by contributing to our garden state tradition through the produce from the Stella farmstand and the horses everyone knows and loves at Sleeter,” said Camden County Commissioner Jeff Nash, liaison to the Parks Department. “Allowing developers to possibly buy and develop these farms that both hold such rich family histories in Camden County would be a criminal act and the State Agriculture Development Committee has helped us ensure that it will never happen. Furthermore, we knew preserving these wonderful green spaces was the right thing to do and will underscore the importance of agriculture in the county and the state.”

“Winslow Township is proud that so many families return to our farmer’s markets year after year to get their locally grown peaches, tomatoes, and corn,” Winslow Township Mayor Marie Lawrence said. “Stella’s Farm is one of those special destinations, and we are thrilled that the land is being preserved to continue the agricultural heritage of our township for generations to come.”

The Sleeters and Stellas will remain the owners of their farms, and the land will remain farmland forever, even if it is sold someday.

The County and SADC will purchase the easements on both farms shortly, bringing the total acres of preserved farmland through the SADC program in Camden County to approximately 1,100.

For more information about the farmland preservation program and the State Agriculture Development Committee, go to <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/> and for the Camden County Agricultural Development Board visit <https://www.camdencounty.com/service/environmental-affairs/agriculture-development-board/>

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