



## **NJDOE News**

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### **State Board of Education Honors New Jersey Students For National Achievements in Agriculture**

The State Board of Education today recognized two New Jersey students for the national honors they achieved at the Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Convention. The students, Michael Brooks and John Coombs, are both graduates of Woodstown High School and members of the Woodstown FFA Chapter.

Michael Brooks, now a sophomore at Cook College, Rutgers University and state president of New Jersey FFA, was named a national finalist in fruit and vegetable production at the recent convention. Brooks earned the distinction by demonstrating the best management practices to efficiently produce and market crops such as beans, spinach and strawberries. He began his project raising a half-acre of strawberries and expanding it to 12 acres of spinach and 15 acres of snap green beans. He currently raises 80 acres of crops as part of a contract with Seabrook Brothers and Sons, Inc. Brooks said he plans to expand his business and continue to be actively involved in New Jersey agriculture as a spokesperson and leader.

John Coombs, a freshman majoring in agronomy at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA and state parliamentarian of New Jersey FFA, won the specialty crop production competition at the national convention. Coombs used best management practices to produce and market his crop of pumpkins efficiently. He increased his crop from three acres in his freshman year to 10 acres in his senior year. He studied the different varieties of pumpkins to plant and monitored planting to ensure proper seed drop and insecticide application. Coombs said he plans for future in the family agriculture business and intends to introduce more precision agriculture and hydroponics while increasing the farm's turf production.

Brooks and Coombs were cited for national honors at the FFA National Convention, held in October in Louisville, Kentucky. Each received monetary awards at the state and national levels for their achievements. As national finalists, they will travel to Costa Rica in June as part of an international FFA experience.

The state board presented Brooks and Coombs with plaques in recognition of their accomplishments. For more information, contact the Department of Education's Office of School-to-Career and College initiatives, 877-652-2733.