

General Strategies
2006 Economic Development Strategies
Year End Summary

In 2006 the Department continued to support improved policy analysis and information on farmland assessment to the Farmland Evaluation Advisory Committee, the Director of Taxation's Farmland Assessment Committee, agricultural organizations, municipal tax assessors and to landowners. The Department's Agricultural Economic Development team actively assisted the agricultural community and related entities on a one-on-one basis with issues related to regulations, taxation, economic development, agricultural production, value-added opportunities and other matters that impact the long-term viability of New Jersey agriculture.

Throughout 2006, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture provided direct assistance to farmland owners, tax administrators and the public on farmland assessment questions and issues. The "Informational Guide on Basic Requirements for Farmland Assessment" was updated and is being used extensively as an educational tool. Looking forward, the State Farmland Evaluation Advisory Committee determined a range of values for cropland, pasture, and woodland for tax year 2007 based on the productive capabilities when devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses.

Crop insurance continues to be a valuable risk management tool that allows farmers to insure against losses due to adverse weather conditions. In New Jersey close to 150,000 acres have liability coverage of \$78 million through crop insurance. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and USDA's Risk Management Agency have partnered together in delivering an educational program on crop insurance to New Jersey producers.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture continued to provide direct assistance to producers interested in USDA's Value-Added grant program that is competitive on a national basis. One hundred percent of producers assisted were successful in receiving USDA grants.

With support from the USDA's Rural Business Opportunity Grant program a new program was proposed in 2006 that is designed to assist in the training of growers interested in learning about the economics and best practices of direct marketing and to assist them to evaluate the opportunities available through participation in community markets.

In accordance with the Department's Agricultural Development Initiatives planning begun in 2006 to develop entrepreneurial and executive level training for the agricultural sector. The following areas of training are being considered; agricultural power machinery operations, computer skills, business marketing management, agricultural processing, food safety, English language training and business communications.

The Department continues to support other programs for worker training, worker health and safety, and farms labor housing.

The Agricultural Tourism Industry
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Agricultural Tourism draws upon two of the great strengths of the Garden State, a rich agricultural heritage and a large population of affluent consumers. Agricultural tourism offers family-oriented recreational and educational activities plus opportunities to learn about agricultural products and the states rich farming heritage while encouraging the preservation of agricultural lands.

A recent Rutgers University Food Policy Institute study of New Jersey agri-tourism funded by the Department indicated that agri-tourism is critical to ensuring the future viability of agriculture in the state. The yearlong study, "The Opportunity for Agritourism Development in New Jersey," found that many farms in New Jersey have turned to agri-tourism as a way to increase revenue in the nation's most densely populated state.

In 2006 the New Jersey Department of Agriculture continued its support for the newly developed Agricultural Tourism Council. The Council is charged with researching current and potential agri-tourism opportunities and making recommendations on ways to expand and promote agri-tourism in New Jersey. It consists of five at-large agri-tourism operators; five designated members from the New Jersey Wine Industry, New Jersey Agricultural Fairs Association, New Jersey Equine Industry Advisory Council, New Jersey Direct Marketing Association, and New Jersey agricultural museums/living history farms; and four ex-officio members: the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers University, and the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Development Commission.

One of the cornerstones of the Agricultural Tourism Council is the Department's comprehensive website that brings together New Jersey's diverse agri-tourism opportunities. The agri-tourism listing on the Jersey Fresh agricultural tourism website includes farm markets, agricultural festivals and special attractions like the New Jersey Museum of Agriculture. The locations, dates and a short description of the activities and events could be cross-referenced on an online agri-tourism map. The website features a searchable database that can be cross referenced by the type of operations such as roadside markets or community markets, or by county, farm name or one of sixty-nine different products or activities. The interactive agri-tourism activities listed on the website include corn mazes, hayrides, school tours and other activities such as hosting birthday parties. The site includes seasonal items such as Christmas trees and cornstalks plus a total of forty-four different produce items can be located. The website is located at: www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/agritourismhome.htm.

In 2006 an innovative new GIS-based *visitnjfarms.org* website was introduced by Rutgers Food Policy Institute. This new website allows farmers to easily announce and update all on-farm products and activities available to the public. It also provides existing, and potential, customers with a user-friendly search engine to locate their favorite Jersey Fresh products or plan and map out a day trip that will conveniently incorporate any number stops to include several farms, wineries or other agricultural attractions. Farmers are now being encouraged to register at that site. The Departments and the Rutgers agritourism websites provide complimentary information and resources and both sides are cross-linked to one another.

The Equine Industry
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New Jersey is one of the nations most progressive equine states offering racing as well as riding trails, rodeos, an active 4-H horse program and handicapped riding programs as well as many horse shows and competitions. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Equine Advisory Board continue to develop new and innovative programs for the industry as well as offering many promotional opportunities

The New Jersey equine website is used to focus attention on horse-related activities, information pertaining to the Sire Stakes, the Horse Park of New Jersey, state racetracks, breeding and development programs and equine rescue groups. The Department's website also offers detailed information about the facilities and services available at each equine operation. The also features schedules of events, lists of horseback riding trails, and other industry related activities.

To ensure a bright future for New Jersey's equine industry the Department continued its work with horse owners to raise awareness of disease threats and animal safety in an ongoing effort to protect the health of horses from the immediate threat of devastating and economically damaging diseases. Working with constituents directly and through veterinarians and Cook College and extension, horse owners are advised of infectious diseases that pose a risk to or within NJ and recommendations to minimize the impact of diseases to their animals. Best Management Practices (BMPs) were distributed to all equine constituents. These guidelines will also allow for increased right-to-farm protection for New Jersey's equine industry.

The Department has begun a branding program for the state equine industry. Using the phrase "Jersey Bred—Born To Win," stickers were distributed at the Harrisburg yearling Standardbred sale by the Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association of NJ that were placed on the pedigrees of all New Jersey-bred horses. To bolster promotion and education efforts to stimulate interest, attract new owners and create career opportunities one of the newest 4-H programs will feature the students raising Standardbred yearlings and preparing them for sales.

The New Jersey Junior Breeder Program and the New Jersey Equine Advisory Board have begun preparations to host a symposium at Cook College Rutgers University. This event will showcase the Equine Science Center and the research projects they are currently developing. The Equine Science Center's monthly reports and bi-monthly fact sheets continue to be well received by the industry.

Racetracks have received approval for the first three off track betting facilities that will be located in Vineland, Woodbridge and Toms River. All three are expected to open within 2007. The racetrack licensees continue to seek and identify additional locations for off-track betting facilities.

The Livestock and Poultry Industry
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In 2006 the Department continued its work to ensure animal health while enhancing industry marketing, encouraging production and examining new and non-traditional New Jersey livestock animals and products and the markets for those products. For several years a trend in New Jersey's livestock and poultry industry has been a transition from a commodity based industry to one increasingly involved in higher value direct sales.

Through the implementation of best management practices for bio-security, the department continued its work to protect the health of New Jersey's livestock and poultry industry from the immediate threat of devastating and economically damaging diseases. The Department's work with owners of livestock assures awareness of disease threats and general animal safety measures. Best Management practices have been distributed to the community. More importantly, every interaction between Division of Animal Health staff and producers, owners and veterinarians includes strategies to minimize the impact of diseases to their animals and the spread throughout their herd or flock.

Several producers have taken the lead with the emergence of the direct marketing of meat and poultry items. The Department is working to organize and support and expand their efforts and increase the volume of direct sales. The "Jersey Bred" logo continues to be promoted to the livestock industry to extend the successful Jersey Fresh brand to that industry. Regulations are currently under review to expand the Jersey Fresh brand for meat products raised or finished in New Jersey.

The Department continues to assist farmers to develop and promote the quality of meat goats. The primary markets for meat goats have already been identified and now the Department is focusing on grower education, commodity marketing and distributor development. A "Meat Goat Production School and Pilot Management Program" was initiated in 2006 to teach the best farm management practices for the raising of meat goats. This educational effort helps producers to maximize inputs while reducing the costs associated with feeding the ruminant animals. Through that educational program producers are certified and become eligible to sell to the four approved dealers coordinating with this project. To further support of this project the Department is working to identify potential producers to apply for USDA value-added producer grants. The primary focus of this project has been on new and beginning farmers to feed out the goats on a seasonal basis. A significant new goat industry, supported by marketing and educational programs, is emerging from this project.

Laws and regulations that affect this industry are constantly monitored to ensure that they address current industry models of production and distribution and support the marketing of locally produced poultry meat and eggs. In 2006 the Department worked with the livestock and poultry industry to study ways that their operations can better meet the particular needs of both traditional and ethnic markets. The rules and regulations for the sale of meat products at community markets are also under review. A new recommendation is being considered to improve the marketing of beef, sheep, goat and pork products and promote livestock sales at several locations throughout the State. The Department continues to support the sale of 4-H animals and to work with existing New Jersey auction markets to coordinate and conduct graded livestock sales.

Dairy Industry
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In 2006 the Department continued to work for increased demand for New Jersey milk, expanded value-added dairy products, while evaluating new legislation and looking at new ways to ensure quality milk production and food safety

The Department supported the branding and distribution of milk as “Jersey Fresh,” “Made with Premium Jersey Fresh Milk,” “Made with Jersey Fresh Milk,” “Jersey Fresh Flavored Milk” and “Jersey Fresh Milk.” Package design is now the final step for the development of these products. At least one processor is already selling cheese and yogurt made from “New Jersey Fresh Milk” under the Jersey Fresh brand.

Sales of “Jersey Fresh Milk” continue to grow at community farmers markets and some producers are expanding their offerings at community markets to include the sale of cheeses. The Sussex County Milk Producers have made progress and are close to shipping milk as a group. One project that has spun off of this group has plans to produce and market a high end soft cheese within the next nine months.

The Department continued tracking any possible legislation that could encompass the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) to possibly achieve more stable short and long-term on-farm milk pricing. The Department has been working with the State’s Ratification Committee to continue moving that process forward while also considering other new options. Through the efforts of most dairy states to push for an extension of the program, federal legislation has been passed to extend the program through August 31, 2007

The nutritional benefits of drinking milk were promoted to young school children through the Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids Initiative. This initiative is jointly sponsored and coordinated by the Department and the North Dairy Council. The pricing, packaging, distribution and market potential of value-added flavored milk continues to be evaluated, as was the concept of low-fat flavored milk for New Jersey’s schools. The New Jersey Dairy Council is continuing its work to develop and fund educational and promotional programs through its check off dollars.

The Department continued its’ work to protect the health of the dairy industry from the threat of devastating and economically damaging diseases. Through the Dairy Alliance partnership two producer meetings have been conducted, all commercial dairy farms have received Best Management Practices (BMP) packets and were visited by staff with one-on-one education about bio-Security and home land security to protect the safety of the milk at the farm and until it leaves for the processing plant. The Department worked with the Garden State Dairy Alliance to support the dairy industry with technical assistance and coordinates a multi-disciplinary team of state and federal partners to cooperatively address issues related to animal health, milk quality, nutrient management, bio-security and dairy industry development. The objective of the alliance is to sustain a viable and thriving dairy industry in New Jersey. The Alliance has concluded its second year with major focus on Milk Quality Bio-Security and Animal Health. In 2006 43 farms were in the milk quality program. A state wide Dairy summit was held, and two producer meetings were conducted through the partnership.

The Wine Industry
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To assist New Jersey's wine industry the New Jersey Department of Agriculture administers a promotion and research fund supported by a per-gallon tax refund collected by the New Jersey Wine Industry Advisory Council. With those funds the Council prints promotional materials, conducts publicity programs, funds promotional festivals and conducts varietals and production-oriented research.

To improve the marketing, promotion and branding New Jersey wines as product produced from locally grown fruits the Department has begun work to improve the labeling of select New Jersey wines. Through the Department's Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program standards are being evaluated to establish a "Made from Jersey Fresh Grapes" logo for use in wine labeling. The logo will ensure the New Jersey origins of the fruit in the making of the wine.

To identify the highest quality of wines produced in New Jersey vintners have the opportunity to put the New Jersey Quality Wine Alliance guarantee on select bottles of wine. The voluntary only apply to wine products which score at least a 13 out of 20 in the Quality Wine Alliance Program. This evaluation scale gives points for appearance, color, aroma and bouquet, acesence, total acid, sugar, body, flavor, astringency and general quality. Only wines that meet or exceed the rigorous review are awarded the QWA designation.

Working directly with the industry the Department continues to support increases in the state's grape production and other efforts to expand the locally grown content of New Jersey wines. Several New Jersey growers have expressed an interest in expanding their current production to include grapes for New Jersey's wine industry. In 2006 the Rutgers Cooperative Extension assisted several growers with these inquiries. The Department continues to support an increase in the minimum acreage required to establish a new plenary winery from three to five acres. To quantify and qualify the size and importance of New Jersey's grape industry a state wide assessment was begun in 2006.

In 2006 legislation was introduced that will expand the number and scope of eligible individual retail outlets, shared outlets and sales at community farmers markets. The same legislation also supports the wine industry's effort to obtain licenses to distill fruit based spirits such as brandies. The issuance of the distiller's license will be limited to farm wineries growing a minimum of eighteen acres of grapes.

Working in conjunction with Food Export USA New Jersey and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture New Jersey wines continued to receive support for promotional support through the Market Access Program's matched funds reimbursement program for overseas promotional activities that might include sample shipments, in-store tastings, foreign language label development and print advertising in magazines and newspapers.

Seafood Industry
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In 2006 the Department continued to expand and promote the “Jersey Seafood” brand to identify local seafood products as distinct from, of higher value, and healthier than competing products. “Jersey Seafood” recipe cards and other point of sale advertising materials are now being used by 94 chain store and independent retailers. To promote the availability to seafood buyers the distribution of the Department’s updated 2006 New Jersey Seafood Suppliers Directory has also been completed throughout the region.

The Department is continuing its work to support and assist the expansion of aquaculture sales at community farm markets. In 2006 a survey was completed identifying the community markets with the best seafood sales potential. Seafood products are now being sold at select community markets and strategies for accessing additional community markets are in place. In 2006 a separate USDA funded project supported the development and distribution of a value-added New Jersey clam product. That bagged clam product which features the “Jersey Seafood” logo is now being sold throughout one of the largest retail supermarket chains in New Jersey.

Department staff has begun work with other state regulatory agencies to establish new guidelines for the safe handling of seafood products. A rule, quality control logo and standards for farm raised seafood is nearing completion and should be ready for the 2007 Summer season. Draft standards are already in place for wild harvest. The new logo will be featured on a suite of promotional materials that will kick off next summer’s season.

The Department’s seafood website has become an integral part of the promotional program. In addition to constantly updated recipes the website features cooking videos of local chefs preparing their favorite New Jersey seafood dishes and other videos such as a cooking demonstration on the correct method to sauté New Jersey sea scallops. Important storing, handling and nutrition information is provided on the website along with seasonal availability information and an interactive calendar of New Jersey seafood related events plus a bi-weekly market report. The detailed supplier database also provides product availability information and a list of online publications plus a profile of New Jersey’s aquaculture industry.

Working with the New Jersey Restaurant Association in 2006, plaques promoting the use of local seafood and produce were placed in 350 restaurants. A similar expanded program is planned for 2007. To expand the outreach of Department promotional activities, working partnerships are being formed with professional organizations representing the foodservice sector. A children’s activity book and other generic promotional materials featuring New Jersey seafood were distributed at festivals and events across the state. Similar activities are planned for 2007 with an expanded list of partners who will assist in promotion and placement.

To support seafood product exports to Asia, Europe, and Latin America the *New Jersey Seafood Suppliers Directory* has been distributed to 104 overseas USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Offices and U.S. Embassies throughout the world. The Department assists New Jersey seafood exporters through Food Export USA-Northeast that provides trade show booth subsidies and encourages the participation of seafood companies in international trade shows.

The Ornamental Horticulture Industry
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The Department continued to ensure plant health for New Jersey's horticultural industry. Inspections for harmful pests and disease were continued and pest control measures and beneficial insect use was increased in 2006. Nurseries were inspected and certified enabling growers to sell certified disease-free material both in and out of state. Seed certification and seed control testing was performed ensuring high quality turf grass seed for New Jersey sod growers. Research continued to identify new varieties of agricultural products resistant to pests, diseases and new plant varieties.

In 2006 the "Jersey Grown" branding program was expanded and strengthened enabling growers to benefit from a common trademark to identify all New Jersey produced horticultural products. Working with growers, independent garden centers and nurseries the Department helped to promote "Jersey Grown" products through the use of point of sale advertising such as price cards, product stickers, labels, tags, and signage. New for 2006 was the introduction of Jersey Grown Christmas tree tags. The new tags ensured area consumers that they were buying cut trees that are New Jersey grown and meet our industry's standards.

The Department of Agriculture continued its work with the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection to promote use of New Jersey produced nursery products whenever possible in their highway planting and forestry programs. The "Jersey Grown Rule" established by the department ensures that all products meet the pest-free and quality standards of the New Jersey Nursery Law. Following the deforestation caused by the Asian Long-Horned Beetle the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is replacing those trees according to the locally grown standards. Through this one effort over nine thousand New Jersey trees were re-planted in 2006 and more than twenty-thousand Jersey Grown trees are expected to be purchased and planted in 2007.

In 2006 the Department expanded the "Jersey Grown" website for the horticultural industry. The website includes an interactive map and an updated online searchable database which can be cross-referenced by a name, town, and county cross referenced by the different horticultural product types. The website also has information and links for gardeners, retailers, arboretums and a list of certified "Jersey Grown" suppliers.

To ensure that the Departments programs continue to address the challenges that face the ornamental horticultural industry in New Jersey the Department regularly communicates and meets with horticultural producers. To educate and inform consumers about the availability, variety and use of "Jersey Grown" horticultural products the department is continuing to work with the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association to create and distribute fact sheets and horticultural articles of interest.

The Produce Industry
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In 2006 the Jersey Fresh program's message was strengthened with a new a "Born On" campaign. The new campaign emphasizes the freshness and unique local origins of Jersey Fresh produce. The new message reflects the results of the Department's recently completed strategic evaluation of the Jersey Fresh program. The new campaign strengthens the local appeal of the brand to consumers and differentiates Jersey Fresh produce as fresher than out of state items marketed using generic "Locally Grown" product claims.

In addition to strengthening the marketing message the Department continued to expand its quality control and food safety programs to meet the growing industry demands for the freshest, healthiest and highest quality produce available. In 2006 two-hundred and sixty-seven growers participated in the Department's "Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program." That program ensures the quality and freshness of all produce shipped in Jersey Fresh boxes. As a further quality control the Department also continued to provide affordable third-party farm certifications. In 2006, nineteen growers and packers successfully completed the USDA - NJDA Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Third Party Audits.

The important combination of our Jersey Fresh local branding program and the Department's quality control and food safety programs was well demonstrated in 2006. A major food safety concern hit the nation's spinach industry just ten days before New Jersey's harvest, however, the Department was able to create a commodity specific message, purchase media and advertise the Jersey Fresh origin of our spinach crop while at the same time promoting to our area's retailers the quality assurances of the Jersey Fresh branded spinach.

To maintain close ties to buyers and retailers of New Jersey produce the Department's marketing staff participates in national industry trade shows, sponsors well attended industry events, sends out weekly e-mail availability reports and communicates directly with wholesalers, retailers and the produce industry media on an almost daily basis. Through regular attendance at grower meetings, the re-establishment of the Market News reports and regularly scheduled radio broadcasts, and through the Departments Vegetable Marketing Taskforce, the Jersey Fresh staff also maintains close daily communication with the growers and marketers of New Jersey produce. It is this close coordination and communication throughout the production, distribution and sales chain that continued to be the cornerstone of the Jersey Fresh program's success in 2006.

The Department recruited numerous growers to attend the six new Community Markets which the Department helped to establish in 2006. Information about New Jersey's Community Markets was promoted on the Department's website and distributed to over 95,000 WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition program participants. To expand the branding of Jersey Fresh produce the Department coordinated the distribution of "Jersey Fresh" twist ties through the Vineland Cooperative. Lastly, to address the growing foodservice industry the Department began working with the New Jersey Restaurant Association to implement a "Proud to Serve Jersey Fresh" sign program.

The Organic Industry
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In addition to being very profitable, organic foods represent the fastest growing segment of agriculture in America, Europe and Japan. The US market for organic agricultural products is projected to reach a value of \$30.7 billion by 2007.

To support the continued development of organic agriculture in New Jersey a certification cost reimbursement program has been established between the Department and the USDA. Through this cost-sharing program New Jersey organic growers and handlers are eligible for reimbursements of up to 75 percent, up to a maximum of \$500, of their organic certification costs. In 2006 the Department continued to work aggressively with its outreach efforts to educate growers and handlers about these available federal funds. In 2006, working directly with our Department, 15 handlers and 28 growers of organic products were approved and processed for reimbursement of organic certification costs.

In 2006 the Department continued working toward USDA accreditation as a State Certified Organic program. This accreditation will give the Department the authority to approve and certify growers as organic producers. This program will help to guarantee consumers of New Jersey organic products that they are receiving only the highest quality organic agricultural products. The process is nearly complete and final accreditation is expected to be received early in 2007. The Department's organic program will also provide farmers who are transitioning to organic production a three-year qualifying period that allows them to market their products as "transitional sustainable" agricultural products.

In 2006 the *Jersey Organic* brand regulations were finalized and published. The full integration of organic products into the Department's *Jersey Fresh* marketing program is nearly complete. Once the Department receives USDA accreditation as a State Certified Organic program New Jersey grown organic products will be eligible to be promoted as distinct from, and of higher value, than competing products through the *Jersey Organic* brand. In 2006 the Department continued to prepare for the branding of *Jersey Organic* products through our website as well through the development and production of point-of-sale materials for *Jersey Organic* retailers, community markets and restaurateurs.

To support growers and handlers, fact sheets outlining the legal and regulatory requirements for production and sale of organic products, including livestock and livestock products continued to be distributed. In 2006 new fact sheets with information about buffer zone guidance and the use of treated lumber were made available as fact sheets.

The Field Crop Industry
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The Department is working in several ways to encourage increased production of certified organic soybeans, corn and wheat. In 2006 organic growers and organic food processors were continued to be linked together and progress continued toward the establishment of ethanol and bio-diesel plants.

Due to the state's high land values, property taxes and labor rates, production costs in New Jersey are higher than in most other production areas. With commodity prices based on national production costs, yields and demand, it is less profitable to produce commodity items in New Jersey than elsewhere. Through organic production growers can increase the value of those crops as they meet the growing demand for processed foods made from organic ingredients. To address the economic challenges of producing field crops the Department continued its support of the organic research project at the Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station in Bridgeton. Conventional and certified organic production methods are being utilized side by side in the same fields. This ongoing project will conduct and compare best management practices for organic soybean and corn crops.

To help connect growers with the demand for New Jersey's organic grain production the Department continues working to link growers of certified organic soybeans, corn and wheat to regional food processors of organic foods. To facilitate this link a list of regional organic producers has been created for growers. Through this list growers can find out more about the organic food industry and which organic grain crops are in demand. A list of organic hay producers was also distributed by the Department in 2006.

One area that offers opportunity for field crops is the emerging prospects of the Green Energy sector's interest in renewable fuels. Both corn, for ethanol production, and soybeans, for bio-diesel production, would be in higher demand should plans for an ethanol plant and a bio-diesel production facility come to fruition. The Department continues to support and facilitate efforts by private entities to construct ethanol-production facilities throughout New Jersey and is working cooperatively as part of the team formulating the State Energy Master Plan to ensure that biofuels like ethanol are a major component of that plan. Those facilities will need a readily available, local source of these feedstocks for their operations. Throughout 2006 the Department continued to support the construction of an ethanol plant or a bio-diesel plant in New Jersey as a way to create major new markets for the state's grain growers.