

# NEWS FROM THE NJDA

New Jersey  
Department of  
Agriculture

## Inside this issue:

From the Secretary's Desk	1
From the State Board	1
Farm Labor Survey Emphasizes Experience	2
SADC Undertakes Urban Farming Project	3
New Website Helps Farmers Find Land	4
Ag Legislation Update	4

## Important Dates for your Calendar:

### August is Peach Month

**July 31-Aug. 9** - New Jersey State Fair & Sussex Farm Show

**Aug. 1-2** - Mercer County Fair

**Aug. 3-9** - Middlesex Cty. Fair

**Aug. 4-7** - Salem Cty. 4-H Fair

**Aug. 6-8** - Atlantic Cty. Fair

**Aug. 12-14** - Somerset Cty. 4-H Fair

**Aug. 19-23** - Hunterdon Cty. Fair

**Aug. 26** - State Board of Ag Mtg. in Trenton

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## From the Secretary's Desk



*NJ Secretary of Agriculture, Douglas H. Fisher*

On July 22, the State Board of Agriculture held its annual reorganization meeting and we had to say goodbye to outgoing Board President, Richard Norz. Rich has been an outstanding leader who guided the board through many tough issues. We thank him for his four years of service and we expect that he will stay involved and serve as an advisor on agricultural issues in the future.

Taking on the role of president for the next year is Marty Bullock, a Monmouth County hay/grain and Christmas tree farmer. Marilyn Russo, a Burlington County fruit and vegetable farmer, was elected vice-president. We welcome Marty and Marilyn to their new leadership roles and we will assist them in every way possible.

As I write this, I am embarking upon a two-day Jersey Fresh Love tour of the state to highlight that our farmers are in peak season for fruits and vegetables. We ask that everyone use #JerseyFreshLove when posting photos of New Jersey produce and the farms and retailers where it is sold on their social media channels. You can learn more about our great farmers and their products on our website, [www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov](http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov).

## From the State Board President



*State Board of Agriculture President, Marty Bullock*

The State Board of Agriculture held its reorganization meeting on July 22, at the Hamilton Manor where 2 of its three new members were sworn-in by Judge Anthony Massi of Ewing. Angelo Trapani of Monmouth County, representing the vegetable and beekeeping industry and Shirley Todd Kline of Cumberland County, representing the fruit industry took their seats on the board. Erick Doyle of Hunterdon County, representing the livestock industry, will be sworn-in at the August 26 meeting, filling the unexpired term of David Klemm.

Trapani, Kline and Doyle were elected by the delegates at the February 2015 State Agricultural Convention for recommendation to the Governor for nomination and later confirmed by the State Senate.

Regretfully, the Board accepted the resignation of Steven Wagner who, due to personal reasons, stated that he could no longer dedicate the time and effort required to continue to serve on the State Board. With that, the Board made a recommendation that Robert Swanekamp temporarily fill the seat to represent the Nursery Industry and sent a letter to the Governor to make this request. A nomination to fill the balance of Wagner's unexpired term would need to be brought forth at the 2016 State Agricultural Convention.

Also during the reorganization meeting, I was elected as President. I am a Monmouth County pumpkin, hay, grain and Christmas Tree grower, and Marilyn Russo, a Burlington County vegetable grower was elected Vice President.

Following the meeting, the Board held a dinner that was attended by the following former State Board members: Noble McNaughton, Burlington; Steve Jany, Mercer; Taylor Palmer, Monmouth; Rich Nieuwenhuis, Passaic; Tom Brodhecker, Sussex; Mary Jo Herbert, Mercer; William V. Griffin, Middlesex; Scott Ellis, Mercer; Henry DuBois, Salem; Jim Giamarese, Middlesex; Dr. Lewis DeEugenio, Gloucester.

The next meeting of the State Board will be August 26 at the Health & Agriculture Building, beginning at 1:30 pm.

## ***New Farm-Labor Survey Approach Emphasizes Experience***

NJDA Legislative Liaison Rob Vivian and Policy Advisor Jeff Beach recently accompanied New Jersey Department of Labor Assistant Commissioner Jeffrey Stoller and Labor Surveyor Dennis Valentin as they visited three blueberry farms – Atlantic Blueberry in Hamilton Twp., Atlantic County; Iron Stone Farm in Shamong, Burlington County; and Sam Moore Blueberry Farm in Tabernacle, Burlington County) – to see first-hand the new NJDOL procedures for seeking information about which farm jobs require experience.

This year's surveys mark the first time a "mandatory statement" seeking information about experience is being read to farmers by NJDOL employees. The new statement encourages farmers to give the surveyors detailed information about which duties they consider should or must be reserved for employees who have specific experience or training, either at the particular farm or in general.

The blueberry farmers, for instance, stressed the need for experience among employees who would be pruning bushes, since improper cutting could significantly impact a bush's ability to produce fruit. They also expressed a preference for experience among any employee who might be operating heavy equipment, as those could be damaging to plants and other employees in the hands of those who do not know how to operate them.

"This information is invaluable in helping the State establish which jobs are in need of experienced workers," said Secretary Douglas Fisher. "After the Department of Labor conducts surveys on all of the various types of farms, there will be a database that can be used to establish experience as a 'prevailing practice.' This will enable our farmers to advertise those specific skilled jobs as ones for which experienced employees are eligible."

The effort to make the state's farm-labor surveys more detailed about experience began several years ago with State Board of Agriculture member Dr. Lewis DeEugenio, who had encountered problems advertising certain jobs on his fruit farm as needing experience. A wider sampling of farmers showed Dr. DeEugenio's case was not unique, and that some farmers were curtailing production or even letting crops rot in the field for lack of qualified workers.

"Our goal is to ensure that New Jersey's farmers have the most appropriate labor force to plant, cultivate and harvest our state's agricultural bounty," Secretary Fisher said. "To do that, we first need to show what prevailing practices exist here in regard to experience. This approved approach to emphasizing experience in the farm-labor survey should help us get there."

## ***SADC Undertakes New Urban Farming Project Close to Home***

State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) staff soon will be harvesting peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, kale, herbs, sunflowers and other vegetables and flowers as part of a new urban farming project on the grounds of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) in Trenton.

Daniel Patrick O'Connell, the SADC's new Fiscal Chief, says the idea for the project initially came from his wife. When dropping him off at work one day, she remarked that the State complex on Warren Street – “concrete buildings surrounded by asphalt” – gave little indication of the agricultural focus inside the Health/Agriculture building.

That prompted O'Connell to approach SADC Executive Director Susan Payne to discuss the possibility of an urban farming project. The most readily-available option was a series of large concrete planters along the front and sides of the building. Some were planted in ornamental grasses but could be re-used to support a more diverse urban farming project. They sought permission from the NJDA and N.J. Department of Treasury for the project and then enlisted the support of the entire SADC staff.

Partnering with Isles Inc. – a community group that works to foster self-reliant families and sustainable communities, including through urban gardening projects – SADC staff in late June planted a total of 23 planters in vegetables and flowers, and consolidated the ornamental grasses into five other planters. Jim Simon and Brandon Ritter of Isles Inc. provided plants and advice, Rick Fletcher of the Department of Treasury helped ensure access to running water and Steve Silberstein of the Department of Agriculture's Division of Plant Industry shared expertise regarding ornamental plantings. Charles Roohr, the SADC's Stewardship Manager who also works on the family farm in New Hanover Township, provided a refillable water cube to make it easier for staff to water their planters, and also supplied some plants and mulch for the project.

SADC staff “adopted” individual planters and will water, weed and care for the crops through harvest. At season's ends, the planters will be re-planted with a cover crop.

O'Connell is hopeful the project will expand next year with an earlier start date and possibly more planters. That way, the outside of the Department of Agriculture's offices will continue to reflect all the ongoing efforts within to keep agriculture and the Garden State growing strong.



*SADC and Isles staff prepare planters for the new urban farming project outside the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's offices in Trenton.*

## ***New Website Now Available to Help Farmers Find Land and Farming Opportunities***

NJ Land Link, a new interactive website, was launched in June to connect farmers who are seeking land or farming opportunities, with those who have farmland or business opportunities available.

The website, [www.njlandlink.org](http://www.njlandlink.org), was developed by the State Agriculture Development Committee and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) through a U.S. Department of Agriculture Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant. The website was designed by the Rutgers Office of Research Analytics.

Farmers interested in land or partnership/job opportunities, as well as those wanting to advertise land and opportunities that they have available, can sign up on the website. Once registered, users can create and independently manage their own listings. Anyone can respond to a listing as long as they register, and responses are automatically directed to the listing creator.

By placing land availability and other important information at farmers' fingertips, NJ Land Link is certain to be a valuable resource for anyone in the business of farming.

Be sure to check out [www.njlandlink.org](http://www.njlandlink.org)!

## ***Agricultural Legislation Update***

Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno has just signed the following pieces of legislation into law:

A-1294 Extends Right to Farm Act protections to commercial beekeepers, with some restrictions.

A-1295 Establishes exclusive State regulatory authority over apiary activities and allows for delegation of monitoring and enforcement authority to municipalities.

A-1296 Establishes penalty for destruction of man-made native bee hive.

The following bills have passed both houses of the legislature and are on the Governor's desk for his action.

A-535 Reestablishes certain historic driving privileges afforded holders of agricultural driver's licenses in operating farm equipment and vehicles.

S-2599 Provides certain definitions for biofuels under "Motor Fuels Tax Act."

SJR-17 Designates September of each year as "Hunger Action Month" in New Jersey.

For more information regarding agriculturally-related legislation, please contact the NJDA's Legislative Liaison, Robert Vivian at [Robert.Vivian@ag.state.nj.us](mailto:Robert.Vivian@ag.state.nj.us).