

## Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture

July 24, 2024

**Summer Food Service Program** - The Food and Nutrition Division Summer Food Service Program and Summer EBT Units attended a Summer Food Service Program Kick-Off Event celebrating the Pemberton Township School District's commitment to feeding food insecure children over the summer months on Thursday, July 18. Pemberton Township School District was recognized for participating in all three federal Summer Nutrition Programs For Kids: The Summer Food Service Program, the Summer Non-Congregate Meal Service Program, and the Summer EBT Program. The USDA granted approval for New Jersey's request for additional FY24 Summer EBT benefit funding in the amount of \$9.6 million to cover an additional 80,000 children, for a revised estimated total of 630,000 children to be served in the program. The required FNS-529 form was signed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) the same day the approval notification was sent. DHS is awaiting transfer of the funds.

**Live Bird Marketing System** - Division of Animal Health (DAH) staff conducted unannounced inspections at 35 registered New Jersey live bird markets and sampled poultry from 14 markets for avian influenza. During a routine unannounced live bird market inspection, an animal health technician sampled sick poultry and submitted a bird for necropsy to the NJDA Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory. Results came back negative for avian influenza and necropsy results showed heavy loads of parasites. The market owner was notified of the results and reported there were no other birds displaying clinical signs.

**FFA National Convention Competition** – Submission of applications for the 97<sup>th</sup> National FFA Convention included six American FFA Degrees, four Honorary American Degrees, four National Chapter Award applications, seven Proficiency Award applications, and 15 Agriscience Fair projects. Also, 25 Career and Leadership Development Event teams/individuals will be certified in September. These students and award recipients will represent New Jersey in October in Indianapolis, Ind.

**Jersey Fresh** – Marketing and Development Division staff coordinated and attended the Jersey Fresh National Blueberry Day promotion day on the boardwalks in Atlantic City, Seaside Heights, and Wildwood. The grape tomatoes promotion is next up on August 5, and then the peaches promotion is August 22 at the same locations. Staff continues to work with OIT and a vendor to finalize the FindJerseyFresh.com website as there have been some technical glitches that continue to be resolved weekly. The Jersey Fresh 40th Anniversary Trivia Contest continues on Facebook and Instagram while staff is staying alert to remove spammers. We are seeing increases over last year's interactions on the social media channels

**Blueberry Plant Certification Program** – The Plant Industry Division's Nursery Program staff conducted the spring phase of the Blueberry Plant Certification Program in June. Staff inspected 36,633 mother plants used for propagating future nursery stock. Six nurseries participated in this year's certification program, three in Atlantic County and three in Burlington County. Five plants were found to have been infected with stunt disease during these inspections. The plants were treated to control the insect vector (sharpnosed leafhoppers; Scaphytopius spp.) then removed and destroyed.

**Animal Health Pathology Laboratory Tests** – The Division of Animal Health continues to monitor the Avian Influenza (AI) outbreak and provide resources to New Jersey poultry and cattle farmers. In collaboration with the NJ Department of Health, guidance on obtaining Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) through extension offices was distributed to dairy farmers. Also, a memo to NJ veterinarians and cattle industry stakeholders was distributed to outline the AI testing capabilities at the Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory. The monthly Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza working group meeting continues, providing an opportunity for partner agencies to share updates in preparedness and response plans for the disease

in New Jersey, in livestock, poultry, and humans. Public outreach through an H5N1 Landing Page is in development by the Governor's Office, as it was determined that accurate information and resource links should be available to the public in one central location. With input from NJ DOH, NJ DEP, and NJDA the page will include basic information about the disease and numerous hyperlinks to state and federal websites that provide additional information.

**Milk Processors** – Marketing and Development Division staff is reporting that two milk processors have started receiving a supply of New Jersey-produced milk from current milk procurement companies with the main purpose being to have an equivalent supply of NJ produced milk to satisfy the school milk rule. Both processors have stated that to receive segregated milk from NJ producers from current milk procurement companies will be almost impossible as companies have indicated they will not provide a segregated load unless full tankers can come from one or a small number of farms and some loads after contracts expire with other plants receiving loads of this milk.

**New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative** – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff met with the New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative (NJ's statewide food policy council) to discuss outreach and education about this collaborative that can be given at the monthly county board of agriculture meetings. NJDA staff put this collaborative in touch with the county board of agriculture liaisons for each county.

**Apiary Presentation** – Plant Industry Division apiary staff assisted the NJDEP Pesticide Evaluation and Monitoring Program with a pollinator presentation to help educate their field inspection unit. Environmental protection inspectors often interact with beekeepers when responding to reports of pesticide application concerns, and the presentations made by NJDA staff will help them be better informed on current beekeeping issues. The state Apiarist and their seasonal apiary inspector presented on bee health, pollinator habitat, and beekeeping in general. The Apiarist described the NJDA requirements for the registration of New Jersey apiaries, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 2:24-3.1 and the partnership with NJDEP regulation N.J.A.C. 7:30-9.11 requiring pesticide applicators to notify registered beekeepers at least 24 hours prior to a pesticide application (within 3 miles of the treatment area).

**Farm to School** – The Food and Nutrition Division's Farm to School team hosted a "mini-Farm to School Academy" on July 17 at Folks Farm and the Burlington County Agricultural Center. The Farm to School Alliance, consisting of interested non-profits/government agencies throughout NJ, learned the methodology and plans for adapting the Vermont Farm to School Institute in New Jersey.

**Mexican Bean Beetle Video** – Secretary Wengryn, Marketing and Development Division staff, and Plant Industry Division staff worked together to film a video on the Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Laboratory's Mexican Bean Beetle (MBB) Program at Chickadee Creek Farm in Mercer County earlier this week. The video will be used to help answer basic questions about how the program works and demonstrate how to release the *Pediobius foveolatus*, a tiny wasp that attacks MBB larvae.

**Heat Stress Information** – Secretary Wengryn released a heat stress message to the industry earlier this month reminding farmers that during these days when New Jersey is susceptible to heat waves (defined by meteorologists as three consecutive days of above-90-degree temperatures), farm managers should keep a close watch on employees who may be adversely impacted by the heat and to follow the advice provided in two documents – one each from Rutgers' New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) and the New Jersey Department of Health – to help keep workers safe and comfortable during these high-heat times. Those documents can be found at: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/FS747/#:~:text=Heat%20stress%20occurs%20when%20the,the%20risk%20of%20workplace%20incidents> and [https://njfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Protecting\\_FarmworkersHEAT.pdf](https://njfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Protecting_FarmworkersHEAT.pdf).