



State of New Jersey

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

MINUTES OF MEETING

June 24, 2026

(Wednesday)

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on June 18, 2026.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by giving written notice of the time, date, location and to the extent known the agenda of this meeting. At least 48-hours in advance this notice has been posted on the third floor, Riverview Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey; mailed to the Newark Star Ledger; the Camden Courier Post; the Trenton Times and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State.

President Bob Blew called the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture to order at 1:05 pm. Board members in attendance included President Bob Blew; Vice President Stephen V. Lee, IV, David DeFrango, John Hart, Joel Viereck, Rick Gardner, Hillary Barile and Holly Sytsema. The meeting was held at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ.

Also in attendance were Secretary Wengryn; Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison; Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition; Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC; Deputy Assistant Secretary/COO Tameko Webster, Chris LaRegina, Tim Idland, Jeff Beach, Anthony Tarr, Rob Vivian (Teams), Kaitlynn Dixon, Agatha Wisnieski (Teams), Alyssa Pitt (Teams), Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Ashley Kerr, Al Murray, NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; Sarah Lally, Lindsay Carragher, Deputy State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency; Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, NRCS; Bruce Eklund, NASS; Laura Tesseri, Organic & Regenerative Farming Board; Ryck Suydam, Somerset County farmer; Manatee Smith, Producers 1 Agriculture Group and Sustainable Solutions; Beth Feehan (Teams), Zone 7; Gary DeFelice (Teams), Monmouth County farmer; Abby Notterman, Abe's Acres Farm, and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ON the MOTION of Holly Sytsema, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2026 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ryck Suydam, Somerset County, was on hand to report to the Board that he had made some progress on the issue of leases of state-owned land. He reported that he had attended the first meeting of the Board's DEP Committee at the request of Chair Joel Viereck so that he could tell them about the issues of concern. He reported that the biggest concern is that in the new lease there is a new restriction that he cannot cut hay on any state-owned land until after July 15, when the crop is old. He stated that anybody who's grown hay knows that it's better in June, which is why we're making it now and that the restriction to harvest after July 15th is a hardship. He stated that the DEP Commissioner visited his farm on June 5 so that he could see what hay looked like in early June. He went into the field and the barn to feel the hay, how soft it is, how it smells, etc. and is going to come back July 15 to see the difference for himself. Ryck stated that he was surprised that the Commissioner took the time to come out and see for himself and thought that earned him some credit, in addition he noted that other issues that the subcommittee will be tackling, such as pesticide licensing, hunting and riparian buffers. Finally, he stated that the last thing that he wanted to mention was the issue of getting data, Senator Smith has asked to see the data on leasing of state lands, is there more in the last 10 years or less? It seems impossible to get the data, he has tired, Farm Bureau has tried, it seems crazy that the Department of Agriculture cannot get data from another department of state government.

DEP Committee Chair Joel Viereck stated that a meeting between the Committee and DEP staff is being organized, and it is hoped that it will take place within the next month or so.

Manatee Smith, Producers 1 Agriculture Group and Sustainable Solutions, asked the status of the Urban Ag Committee and what the next steps are moving forward and noted concern that Board member Dave DeFrance would be going off the Board. Board member DeFrance stated that we had been planning to meet in Atlantic City but due to unforeseen circumstances that needed to be changed and the internal Committee is working on scheduling a tour and meeting.

Beth Feehan (Teams) currently works for Zone 7, a regional food distributor based in Ringoes. She wanted to comment about the pending legislation for local food for schools and the past funding that just came out in March, which was released for schools to purchase local food from food distributors. She would just like to say it's her dream that food is sold in schools that is grown locally. She was the former Farm to School Coordinator at the Department of Agriculture, so this has been her mission for 20 years. She would ask the Department of Ag to please do some research about this last round that was released in March before the growing season really started and to weigh in and dig into the data of what was able to be sold and to press the legislators, if they're doing this again, to start funding at the beginning of the school year when we are ripe with products from New Jersey and not to squish this in right before the school year closes. It was a very big burden for the farms, and it really stretched the distribution community beyond our capacity. Although we're grateful for the business and it's a different day than it was in 2008 when we started this conversation. But when funds are released for schools to buy locally is very important for the systems that exist. And she'd be happy to speak to anyone who wanted to ask questions about the data that we see in our sales for what's behind us in order to plan better for what's in front of us.

Gary DeFelice (Teams), Monmouth County farmer, wanted to bring to your attention a matter that he was asked to weigh in on and possibly support in Upper Freehold Township, Monmouth County. The concern is with two farmers in Upper Freehold, both are livestock producers, one is a pork producer, the other a beef producer, they both bring their animals to a USDA inspected processing facility where the respective livestock is processed. Each cut of meat is packaged in a vacuum sealed packaging, then flash frozen and sent back to the farmers where they market the meat in its frozen state. The issue is that both were visited by the County Department of Health who presented them with a cease-and-desist order from selling their meat based on non-compliance with the current state health codes that govern retail food establishments. After reviewing the rules and conferring with Dan Wunderlich and Frank Minch at the Department, as well as our county officials and local legislators, it is agreed that the Department of Ag and the State Department of Health, particularly the regulatory folks in the Department, need to come up with an assessment to better interpret the rules as they were intended when they were developed back in 2007, or amend them to today's standards of the marketing of meat products produced on the farm so that they could be sold. This will affect many of the farms throughout the state who could be found in non-compliance similar to these folks in Upper Freehold and face the financial hardships that these two farmers are currently facing right now. It seems that from his investigation and working with everyone for the last few weeks, that the Department of Health there is dragging their feet with the issue at hand, and need to be held accountable.

Board President Bob Blew stated that the Board is aware of this situation and that Department staff has been actively working on it. He stated that we hope to know more in the coming days/weeks.

Board member Rick Gardner asked if the producers have a licensed store on the farm that they are selling from.

Mr. DeFelice stated that was the initial problem when the Health Inspector visited them and it appeared that it may have been a request by Code Enforcement just to be sure that these producers were in compliance. When the inspector arrived, he told them that they had to have their freezers and refrigerators issued a permit so they could be inspected on a periodic basis. Both producers did not realize that and said that they will do whatever is necessary to be in compliance. The next day, the inspector came back with a cease-and-desist order. It was noted that because they were directly selling there is a need for a retail food establishment license because he wanted to put a bathroom in. In addition, Chapter 24 is for seasonal farm markets, these are seasonal markets, they are not official stores. They're more like your roadside stand, your wagon, except it's a refrigerator setup, that is where the confusion is and that is what the Department of Health is trying to work through. How do we treat them? Where should this be, and our team of Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison, Dan Wunderlich and Director Frank Minch are working with the Department of Health to come up with a strategy. It was noted that because it is meat, it is a temperature-controlled product. Mr. DeFelice stated that he hopes that we can come to a consensus because these producers are under financial hardship. It is hoped that they can come to some consensus prior to the upcoming July 4 holiday when everyone will be barbecuing.

Abby Notterman, Abe's Acres Farm, we are a small farm in East Windsor. We grow mixed annual vegetables and like a lot of farms our size, we process excess produce into sauces, salsas, pickle products, that sort of thing, using commercial producers offsite. We sell these products at various

farmers markets and pop-ups. We recently applied to sell at a new farmers market in West Windsor. We applied, we sent in our certifications from our processors, and we were asked where our license was to store value-added products on our farm. So, my comment is consistent with Gary's comment on this issue of retail food establishments. I said, "I have no idea what you're talking about." We've been doing this for years and here are certifications from our processors. And the next thing, you know, my local health inspector called and said, it's come to our attention that you are storing that, you know, jarred product on your farm. And we need to come inspect and you need to have a permit for this. I went to a meeting with East Windsor Township. They scheduled an inspection, which I've now postponed until next week in the hope that I can get some clarification on some things. The biggest question is whether Chapter24 applies to us. So, the question is, is passive storage of field commercially processed foods, like what we have, sauces, salsas, that sort of thing, with no consumer interaction, no food handling, is that enough to transform us into a retail food establishment under the administrative code?

President Blew thanked her for her comments.

REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Dr. Brian Schilling represented the College and reported on the following topics:

- Dean's Report, one of the articles, speaks about freeze damage and the assessment of those damages. The evening of the last State Board meeting Dr. Lewis DeEugenio hosted a Twilight Meeting at his farm. Some of our agents were trying to work with the tree fruit growers to help them navigate what do you do when an orchard crop isn't producing, what management you put in, what can you defer, what you prioritize so you don't have damages spilling in the next year. report out. I think that meeting was well done. In terms of the assessment, we continue now, especially with set pretty much done and blueberries and harvest, we should have a better sense of what some of the economic losses look like. The more on that as things evolve.
- Personnel updates, I believe that we are imminent in terms of completing the search for the vegetable statewide vegetable IPM agent, which we're very eager to bring on, as well as our new Bergen County agent. Since we last met, Amelia Valente took over as a 4-H agent in Monmouth County. We're seeing a lot of domino effects as younger folks are starting to build career trajectories within Extension, so they leave one position and, you know, or ultimately trying to look for a career paths in Extension, which is great to see, but we're looking at some retirements ahead of us. It's going to be a wild ride for the next few years.
- He reported on the recent loss of Bill Fox in Ocean County as a result of a farm accident. He stated that Bill was always a strong, honest critic and that he knew him going back to the early 90's. He was a good leader in agriculture and he will be missed.

REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Lindsay Carragher reported on behalf of the Farm Service Agency:

Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program

FSA is delivering ASCF assistance to eligible producers based on reported 2025 planted Specialty Crop acres. Deadline for enrollment is August 7, 2026. Pre-filled ASCF applications are available to producers who timely filed their 2025 crop acreage report for eligible specialty crops. Only one application is required for all ASCF eligible specialty crops nationwide. Producers can apply through Login.gov or

request their pre-filled ASCF application from their county office. FSA used national average revenue per crop as a metric for developing the ASCF program payment categories and payment rates listed below. There will not be a payment factor, and payments will be issued as applications are approved.

Payment Eligibility and Payment Limitations

FSA is expanding payment limitation and payment eligibility provisions that affect program payments. Producers will benefit from an increased payment limitation for certain programs, and a broader definition of farming income that will result in more exceptions to income limitations.

Starting with the 2026 crop year, for payment eligibility purposes, FSA will treat applicable limited liability companies (LLCs) and S-Corporations (S-Corps), and other similar entities, as “pass through entities.” Each member of the qualified pass-through entity who meets actively engaged in farming criteria will help qualify the entity for expanded payments.

For program year 2026 only, farm operations that are structured as LLCs or S-Corps or one of the new qualified pass-through entities must file updated farm operating plans with FSA for program year 2026 by September 15, 2026. After program year 2026, FSA will continue to use June 1 as the date for determining ownership interest in an entity.

An additional change allows members of all entity types to receive compensation for labor and management contributions and use the same contribution to qualify as “actively engaged in farming.” This update provides consistent treatment of member contributions across all entity types.

ARCPLC

Payment limitation changes include an increased payment limit for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. Starting with crop year 2025, the ARC and PLC payment limit will increase from \$125,000 to \$155,000. This payment limit will be adjusted going forward annually based on inflation.

Base Allocation Summary

Landowners were sent a postcard or email with instructions for accessing their Base Allocation Summary either through Login.gov or through their local Farm Service Agency office. Landowners who have a Login.gov account can access their Base Allocation Summary online or by contacting their local Farm Service Agency office for information on how to receive their summary.

After reviewing the Base Allocation Summary, landowners should contact their local FSA office if:

- Acreage history data is incorrect or missing
- There are “subsequent acres” listed and they would like to choose the subsequent acreage for base allocation
- To opt out of receiving any additional base acres

Landowners have until August 31, 2026, to take any of the actions listed above or to appeal the accuracy of information contained in the Base Allocation Summary to the FSA County Committee by filing a written request.

After reviewing your base allocation summary, no further action is required if the information is correct. If FSA is not notified, the Base Allocation Summary will be considered accurate and complete. All acreage reported as eligible in the summary will be used to determine the new base allocation percentage, and new base acres will automatically be allocated to the farm(s) with the designated percentage for each farm(s).

Farms will maintain current base acres; however, eligible farms may increase base acres through the base allocation process. After the base allocation process is completed, election and enrollment for ARC and PLC will be announced for program year 2026.

County Committee 2026 Election Period– Now Open!

Farm Service Agency County Committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs. Elections occur each year in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This can include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area. The nomination period for the 2026 COC election began June 15th. Eligible voter lists are available to the public and postcards with information on how to obtain nomination forms will be mailed out to those eligible voters. Anyone that would like to nominate someone for an LAA (Local Administrative Area) up for election will need to submit an FSA-669A to their County Office prior to August 3.

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (Stage 1 and Stage 2)

FSA is delivering more than \$16 billion in SDRP assistance. Stage 2 of SDRP covers eligible crop, tree, bush and vine losses that were not covered under Stage 1 program provisions, including non-indemnified (shallow loss), uncovered and quality losses.

Stage 1 remains available to producers who received an indemnity under crop insurance or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for eligible crop losses due to qualifying 2023 and 2024 natural disaster events. Producers have until August 12, 2026, to apply for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 assistance.

Thus far, New Jersey FSA has approved 603 SDRP applications and paid over \$15.3 million to New Jersey farmers. Nationally, FSA paid over \$13 billion. There is a public facing dashboard if producers are interested in following SDRP signup. Initial SDRP payments were factored at 35%, but USDA has increased the payment factor to 70%, therefore producers with approved applications have received an additional 35% of their calculated SDRP payment. Future SDRP payments will be made using a 70% payment factor. SDRP provides disaster relief payments to eligible producers who suffered revenue, quality, or production losses to crops, trees, bushes, or vines due to qualifying disaster events in calendar years 2023 and 2024. SDRP assistance to eligible producers will be delivered in two stages. Producers can receive payments in both stages, if applicable, and for one or both years, depending on losses. The signup period for Stage 1 opened on July 7, 2025. Stage 1 leverages existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)

Bruce Eklund, State Statistician, reported the following:

- Two big reports, the National and New Jersey Ag intentions, are coming out at the end of the month. So that shows corn and soybean intentions and farmers will look at that and adjust accordingly.
- Last week the floriculture survey was released, which is done annually.
- Urban Ag – I was working intensely on that group, trying to be sure we represent Urban Ag. A working group has been established to review this, and he was named the National Coordinator. He noted that he would be talking with some of you to make sure we don't miss any urban ag farms and represent the importance of it.
- Freeze damage – we are working with all the different partners here on the details of what commodities we have, you know, nurseries that are outdoors and, you know, fruit and vegetables and how they're applied across the state.
- So let me give you a quick rundown. Before we had a consolidation in 2013, I was in Oregon. Unfortunately, we had a reduction in staff of almost 40% in early 2025, and I became part of a national team on the census, but I was able to work on New Jersey and Vermont issues. He noted that a couple weeks ago, they said, oh, by the way, you're moving to Saint Louis if you want to hang around. So, if there is a way I can do whatever they want me to do, but not have to move, because I can serve them nationally or do whatever they want me to, but New Jersey needs somebody to help look out for. I really enjoy working with everybody here, really collaborative efforts.

Board member Joel Viereck stated that we did get acknowledgement from Lakia Jones, which is Chief of Staff to the Administrator at NASS, that they did receive the letter that the State Board sent and they are looking to set up a meeting regarding you staying here. So, I'll have more update on that, hopefully something positive comes out. We are trying everything that we can, because we definitely do appreciate all the work you're doing here. Bruce commented that it means a lot to me and that your effort, I do think, has an effect.

REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU

Ashley Kerr represented the Farm Bureau and reported on the following topics:

- The federal disaster designation for the spring freeze was approved which opens emergency loans for farmers through the USDA FSA. State support is still needed. Has there been any movement on an emergency state appropriation for farmers? We appreciate the letter that was sent by the SBOA and are hoping for the governor to create a grant program ASAP rather than having to wait until the fall to ask the Legislature.
- There has been some press stating that a deal has been reached on the budget and it could be finalized this week. After that the Legislature will break for summer. Unfortunately, that may mean that the new SBOA members will not be confirmed by the Senate until the Legislature reconvenes in the fall unless there is a special meeting in July.
- The package of bills for SADC's annual appropriations passed the Senate last week but there has been no movement in the Assembly. Bill for state LFS program has moved through committees in both houses (A1492/S1650). We have heard that there was an issue with timing of the money

released for LFS by the SBOA and that there needs better planning in future with more time for the schools to spend the funds.

- A2524/S3939 to permit dual-use solar energy projects to participate in the community solar program has also been released from committees in both houses. S2215 to allow farmers tax credits for fruit/veg donations released from Senate Economic Growth. A4237 which establishes a Large Animal Veterinarian Loan Redemption Program and appropriates \$200,000 was released from Assembly Ag.
- NJFB hosted the quarterly meeting of the Fish & Game Council Farmer/Sportsmen Committee yesterday. Discussion included a flyer for bear depredation (similar to the one done for deer), need for clarification on HHH record keeping, and finalization of game code changes on June 30.
- NJFB sent a letter to the Governor's office on the recent press regarding farmland assessment. Meetings have begun in the four counties that are part of the rollout of the portal for this year, check NJDA's website for times.
- Implementation of the NJREAL rules has been delayed by one year until July 20, 2027. The NJDEP will hold a virtual public hearing on July 7 at 6pm regarding the postponement. Hoping for the SBOA NJDEP subcommittee to insist on an agricultural carve out from these rules. NJFB will assist in asking for the same. Additionally, the Statehouse Commission met last month and discussed the ag lease issue faced by farmer Ryck Suydam, subcommittee should be updated on this progress.
- Getting calls from our members regarding issues with the definition of retail food establishment, local health officers are shutting down farm stands claiming that they need a license, sinks and bathrooms because they sell raw, frozen, USDA packaged meat or value-added products. Need to update the NJDA document on such and have DOH share with local inspectors. Markets should be allowed to be open until this is done.
- Senate version of Farm Bill released the previous day for discussion only.

REPORT OF NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, reported the following:

- Received close to \$6 million for the Conservation Stewardship program and we want to retain those resources for our farmers. There is still one more week for sign up through June 30. NRCS provides funding opportunities for agricultural producers and other landowners through these programs. Participation in our conservation programs is voluntary. NRCS accepts requests for technical assistance and applications for financial assistance throughout the year.
- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions. NJ's priorities for RCPP are Water Quality, Soil Erosion, Soil Quality, and Wildlife Habitat. By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation. RCPP projects fall under two different categories: RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFAs, NRCS provides funding to partners to support conservation activities with eligible producers and landowners on eligible land. RCPP AFA funding reimburses partners for conservation activities done for or on behalf of producers, landowners, or other entities.

ORGANIC & REGENERATIVE FARMING BOARD

Laura Tesseri, North Jersey RC&D reported on behalf of the Organic & Regenerative Farming Board that the last meeting of their Board was in May, they have spent a good deal of time this year looking back at the 2025 Regenerative Farmer Needs Assessment, looking at the findings, analyzing and carrying forward the priorities that they would like to work on with the Department of Agriculture. She noted that expanding farmer access to both business plans, marketing opportunities as well as mentorship opportunities. She noted that farm resilience and farm profitability are some of the leading priorities. She reported that the next meeting of the Board will be September 15 at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County from 4–6 pm and invited all to attend. She noted that the final meeting of the year would be on December 10 in coordination at the State of the Food System meeting that is run by the NJ Food Democracy Collaborative in New Brunswick.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Wengryn reported that he attended the NEASDA Conference in Amherst, MA with Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison, Deputy Assistant Secretary Tameko Webster and Ag & Natural Resources Director Frank Minch. These meetings support regional collaboration as NEASDA is comprised of commissioners, secretaries and directors of agriculture from Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and New Jersey. He noted that New Jersey will be hosting NEASDA in 2028. He noted that the area reminded him of our Central Jersey farm areas, great soils and beautiful views. He noted that the meeting was very productive with important updates from our federal partners. He announced that the Department celebrated Pride Month with a celebration at Fairgrown Farms in Pennington. The day featured a tour of the farm and its sustainable agricultural practices and a panel discussion about the community's experiences, challenges, and triumphs. The event underscored the importance of representation, support, and unity in cultivating a welcoming and inclusive agricultural landscape for all. He thanked James Kletet for hosting. He announced that they would be attending a pollinator event at Drumthwacket the next day. He noted that Jeff Burd is the current beekeeper at Drumthwacket. He noted that the SADC would be meeting the following day. He attended the West Windsor Farmers Market earlier in the month where the dairy declaration was presented.

Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition, provided the Board members with copies of the newest Farm to School resource book. She noted that the Summer EBT Unit is pleased to report that more than 681,000 eligible children across the state are receiving Summer EBT benefits ahead of the official start to summer. She reported that the School Nutrition Program Unit is completing Administrative Reviews and starting the planning and training development for the upcoming school year. Finally, she reported that last week, the Governor signed A3882, which we're really excited about that legislation. It requires school districts to post their free and reduced online application in a prominent space on their webpage. So, we will be providing guidance to school districts and ensuring that they are in compliance with that legislation. We were we are working on finalizing the press release for Summer EBT. To date, we've had just over \$11 million redeemed in summer EBT benefits. So hopefully that press release will get out there soon. Our NJF2SPI, our New Jersey Farm to School Procurement Initiative, to date, we have received just over \$800,000 in receipts from school districts.

Board member Hillary Barile said I know Farm to School was like the funding was a little shifting thing over this last year, but just in response to the public comment, do you guys do any of your own data collection about how some of that kind of impacted the program this coming year? Rose stated that they are still collecting the receipts from the schools and she will work with her staff to see when we'll have that information finalized and then we can share that with you in terms of the farms that were purchased from and as well as the items.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, reported that the Program staff conducted five dealer inspections and 156 nursery inspections during the month. These included an examination of overwintering nursery stock to determine whether it remains free from insect and disease pests and a review of the nursery stock source certification. In addition, horticultural staff also conducted 23 phytosanitary inspections conducted during May. He noted that all LDD surveys were finished as of today.

Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC, reported that he did not have any updates from his report. It was noted that the new funding formula has increased the number of applications that they are receiving. There was a question about the CBT monies and how they are used. It was noted that county monies are not under the control of the SADC. It was suggested that the CBT monies be tracked so that the public can see where they are going.

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, reported that a Division of Animal Health veterinarian attended a four-day USDA virtual New World Screwworm response training. This course prepared state and federal staff on the strategies for mitigation and control if the pest is identified in their state. The training helped bolster NJ's understanding of the critical interagency cooperation expected during a NWS response, as the wide range of hosts can affect the ability to control the spread. He reported that the fly that carries the screwworm can infest not only livestock, but also household pets like dogs and cats, as well as humans, where infections from the flesh-eating worms are rare but very serious. He noted that there was a case of HPAI in one of our live bird markets earlier this month, it happened immediately after we discontinued enhanced sanitation that we implemented in the late fall. He noted that there have not been any additional cases since then, we will continue to monitor the situation.

Anthony Tarr reported that he did not have any updates to his monthly report other than the Fiscal staff is extremely busy as there are just six days left of the fiscal year.

Board member Joel Viereck thanked Mr. Tarr for all the extra time that he has taken to review with the Board's Budget Committee each Division and providing the Board with all of the information that they have requested while undertaking the review of the Department's finances.

Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, reported that the Southern part of the state has moved to D3, so that's parts of Atlantic, Cape May, and Ocean. The D2 has moved up, it's right at the 195 cut off and up. He noted that Sussex County is still in D1 status. He noted that fortunately the July weather outlook doesn't look too good so we will continue to work with DEP and continue to monitor that but noted that it is important for the FSA programs as we get into the D# or extended D2, so please keep providing that information and look to what the irrigation needs are. He reported that heat stress continues to be a serious concern as the heat has been very challenging. He

noted that later that week he would be meeting with the Department of Health and the Department of Labor to be sure that the heat stress information is shared with everyone so that they can be sure that they are taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of all. It was noted that the drought designations are based on the information that is reported to the state drought monitor.

Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison reported to the Board that there were reports of a miracle peach orchard in South Jersey and the Division's Bureau Chief went out to confirm that they had anywhere between 55 to 65 percent of a crop, so they are supplying a lot of farm markets with Jersey peaches. He reported that Division staff attended the Food Town/Allegiance show for their staff, they brought in all departments and we had some good conversations with some of their vendors including Procacci and Pete Pappas who are looking for Jersey Fresh materials, so it was a really good show from that aspect. He announced that July 8 is National Blueberry Day and Division staff will be on the boardwalks giving away about 840 pints of blueberries in each of the 3 locations with the pricing right now is about \$30 per flat, they are hoping that the cost might go down a bit so we can provide more blueberries. He announced that he would be travelling to Rhode Island for the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Administrative Council meeting, August 6 is the Jersey Tomatoes game at the Jersey Shore BlueClaws Stadium; August 18 will be the New England Produce Council Trade Show in Everett, Massachusetts, just north of Boston. He noted that there does seem to be a lot of positive promotion of Jersey Fresh and that is great news.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Tameko Webster reported to the Board that the Department celebrated Pride Month and Juneteenth as well as a proclamation for Dairy Month. She thanked Gardner News and the Farm Bureau for the article about her new position at the Department of Ag. She noted that the Department staff continues to do a great job to ensure our Department moves forward collectively. She noted that they had a great time at the NEASDA conference. She reported that the Conference, for her, was an opportunity to learn what other states are doing so we can bring it back to New Jersey and do it better. We are awaiting, like everyone, on the final terms of the budget. In terms of promoting our agency and how we communicate with the public, we are working on website migration and are in the process of hiring a temp to support our full-time staff and really just clean up our website to make it more public facing where people have real-time information. We've done a great job of just moving from 2002 to 2026, but we still have some work to do in that area.

Secretary Wengryn reported that he has been working with our USDA partners, particularly with Rural Development and on June 30 we will be having a Seafood Stakeholder get together, which will include our aquaculture industry as well as the commercial fishermen. USDA has created a new Office of Seafood so that USDA Administrators can be on the call to hear from the industry.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Hillary Barile reported that most of her comments had already been covered and now that most of the county boards are out for the summer, it's been relatively quiet because we are all just irrigating. From the last meeting, Dana Davis made some comments around the New Jersey Brewery Distillery Cidery Meadery Advisory Council and some funding that's tax collected from those individuals to go to local promotions groups. She had submitted an OPRA request around the funds in that account and found out that there's approximately \$1,000,000 sitting in that account. That advisory council needs to be appointed in order to start working on spending that money in support of those industries around New

Jersey. I've had a few conversations with some of my partners who have associations of brewers and distillers to see if they have some names, they've all assured me that they're putting together their lists to recommend up to the Governor's Office.

Holly Sytsema reported that Sussex County has allocated a lot of money for the upcoming fair. She reported that producers were grateful for the disaster declaration and reported that another county has joined the highway program and urged other counties to participate as well.

Joel Viereck reported they would be participating in the July 15 Summit. Also, the NASS discussions that I've had, hopefully there's some positive to come out of that. The other thing I touched on earlier after this last meeting on June 2nd, I had a chance to go to the Eisenhower building to meet with Jason Becker of the Office of Public Liaison and was able to talk directly with him. It was a one-on-one meeting where we talked about freeze damage and the needs for disaster assistance, labor challenges in the state and across the country, rising input costs and their impact on farm profitability and all that. And then we had some broader discussions regarding USDA and the farm credit system. Notably, they just nominated two members for the FCA, which is our main regulated board because of that meeting. So, there are some positive things coming out of there that the administration had to do. They met with the whole Farm Credit Council, which is a board of Farm Credit Board members from across the country the day before that. Nice to see that they moved on that quickly within the month, and that was something they'd been waiting for for quite a while. Then we talked about broader trade issues. Joe touched on about product that comes in for Canada. We're able to ship up there, but as soon as they start, they block us out. So, we talked about some of those broader trade issues, which was a positive discussion as well. They are very much supportive of trying to make fair trade for us with our product in this country. So, they made that very clear to me the importance of overall strong domestic food supply. After that meeting, I joined one of my colleagues on the Farm Credit Board and we met with representatives from Booker's office and Senator Kim's office and kind of reiterated some of the same things and heard some of those issues when Liz was there, the Farm Bureau, some of the same things were brought up by Kim and they kind of talked about it. So, it's nice to sort of hear that reiterated again, like it is getting traction or paying attention. Other than that, we expect an update on the US ITC on the tomato ground issue that I testified on. That's going to be done on Friday, so hopefully we'll have a positive outcome there.

Our markets have been, produce-wise, a little sluggish here, even with some of the weather events. Squash, pickles, all that, they're lower than average at this point, but they do seem like that balance and some of the other crops, peppers, eggplants, and potatoes look positive, so hopefully that will continue that trend. I also was able to host the Vice Chair of the Ag Committee, Assemblywoman Simmons, at my farm. She came out and I showed her the status of some of the crops. We also looked around some of the packing houses. Anytime she comes, she's always alarmed at the amount of product that we have to throw away that doesn't meet the grade. I explained to her, it's easier to say pack it in the woods than it is to sort of find other homes for it, because it's a small amount, but it is a large amount. Hopefully, you can continue those discussions about how we can get some of this through, because it is perfectly good. It just has a little defect in it and get it to people that need it. But that's a broader discussion. Also took her for a ride in one of our GPS guided tractors. She was amazed at how it could literally hold a row within an inch and not run over the corn. Things like there's literally the corn's 30 inches apart and you have an 18-inch-wide tire, and you don't hit anything. And she was amazed at how that works. So, we did a couple of laps in that. Again, she was pretty impressed by that, but I think that helps her see the

need for this precision equipment and see how good that works. Other than that, as Hillary said, there aren't any county ag board meetings. I was contacted, though, by the Gloucester County Ag Board President, James Rambo, who spoke last meeting in some of his report. He shared some frustration with me about his concerns raised about the agritourism grants. He told me to mention that. I told him I would and leave it there. He's getting frustrated and impatient with where I would leave it. I don't know where that leads from there, but I urged him to come on to public comment, though, if he had anything. So that closes everything I have to say. I just want to say I'm looking forward to hosting the legislative tour on Friday.

Rick Gardner stated that he had attended the Warren County Board of Ag meeting. The most significant news came from a board member and long-time local veterinarian, Dr. Bruce Fry. He discussed the issues concerning the Asian longhorn tick. Two cows that he had he was treating, one cow died and he believes the other cow is either dead or will die from the tick. According to Dr. Fry, there is no known treatment, attacks red and white blood cells, but the majority of the damage is to the red blood cells. There are veterinary pharma companies working on a vaccine, but who knows when that will be available. Last year, another farm in Pennsylvania lost five heads of beef cattle because of ALT. A preventative measure to some degree is to keep the livestock away from low-lying, swampy areas. Oh, another thing about the tick, one female tick can lay a 3,000-egg cluster and they're half the size. Just so, they're asexual, so it means they don't need a male. He reported that they will have their Legislative Meeting in September. He reported that he participated in the Budget Committee meeting, it covered a large amount of statistical information. He thanked Tony for explaining the various accounts and the timelines associated with these accounts. I certainly learned a great deal in a short window of time and developing questions about the timelines and usage, and in some cases, the lack of expense of some of these accounts.

John Hart commented that the previous day, he met with some wine, cidery, and brewery people yesterday at his farm. We were discussing the need for an industry alcohol advisory board. Some of these growers want to use Jersey grown products, we want to share our products. We wrote up proposed legislation that we would like to get a sponsor for. There is no representation, and we'd like to have that. In addition, they would like to have possibly have a commodity council type organization that would come to the convention. And there's legislation that's already enabling this brewery, winery, distillery, cidery, meadery product promotions council. He reported that he attended the Farmer Sportsman's Committee yesterday, talking about depredation permits and bear season coming up, challenges they have with deer and bear hunting. He offered some suggestions on deer. He noted that there is currently no money coming into the Hunter's Helping the Hungry for butcher shops to process venison for the Food Banks. The shop at my farm, I rent that out, now donated 600 deer donated to Mercer Street Friends. He butchered them up, packaged them, but there is no funding for Hunters Helping the Hungry.

David DeFrance reported that much of what he was going to say had been covered. He reported that that Hunterdon County will be joining the 579 Trail. He reported that at the County level there were some lengthy discussions on who should be included and what the definition of a farmer is. So, we're digging deep, it kind of got derailed in the conversation. I think it's a discussion that might assist in the selection of who's on there and size and magnitude of reach. In the process, you know, we finally got the "Whose Your Farmer" website set up and running. I'll thank the Secretary of Hunterdon County Board

of Ag for getting that going, it's been a challenge. But ultimately, started off as specialty crops and now it's all farmers. So, it's basically defining who your farmer is, and it links to your website. So, whoever in the area can go. So, it's not excluding everybody at this point, it's including everyone. So, you know, our focus in the county because between the drought and between next generation, trying to get next generation out and things like that, we're really kind of focusing on defining what a farmer is in Hunterdon County, defining how we work with a local community, for-profit companies and basically a better pathway to work together with workforce development. So, I commend the county board for, you know, supporting the efforts and moving forward to try to engage all groups within the county. I think right now it's a good distraction for the year we have.

Vice President Lee reported that the last measurable rain we had in the southern part of Burlington County was Memorial Day weekend. We have had at least since that apart from two nights ago, the challenge is that blueberries, although they're \$30 flat on the boardwalk, the unfortunate part is for the first time I saw mechanical harvesters out in the field. But to see that in the early part of June is unprecedented, labor is clearly an issue. So, I think if you have an opportunity to be able to buy blueberries from anybody, I think it's important to do. After our last meeting, I had a chance to go sit with Herb Conaway and a couple other representatives of the ag community. And the one thing that we talked about was we thanked him for the help of the disaster declaration. But farmers don't necessarily want another loan, regardless, if it's 3% or 2% or whatever the number is. Direct support for farmers is important and if we have a way of being able to have it structured to where we're able to give direct support for those who suffer losses because of frost or are suffering losses because of drought or whatever it is, that's probably a more sustainable process to follow. He seemed to agree with that, in fact, he has some friends in Congress that have had the same challenges that we've had. Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York so he's hoping to find some sort of coalition within Congress to be able to do a direct appropriation. The reason I asked the question at the beginning of the meeting about numbers is that we may get the same question from our state legislators, where we must be able to provide that information, what exactly the loss is. So, my plea is, is that if you experience any kind of damage at all, please report to FSA at the very least. That gives at least a benchmark to go from, but at the end of the day, I think that both on the federal level and the state level we have, the lawmakers are interested in being able to support us. We just need to be ready with the numbers when it comes time to have those conversations.

In addition, he reported that there was a Personnel Committee meeting earlier today, and there was some good dialogue and emphasized that our transition into the new structure that the Board approved will be July 1. We had some very good dialogue today and noted that the expectation of the Board, frankly, is that we will have the buy-in from our team to move forward in this direction. He emphasized the role that Tony Tarr has taken on with the fiscal component of our Department is something that's very critical. The expectation that the Board has of Tony, is to go through and kind of look underneath the beds and focus on the fiscal component of our Department. We appreciate the support of his office and his mission in ensuring that that gets done. He commended the Budget Committee for spearheading that work. We need to constantly work on the fiscal responsibilities of our Department and we need to do it together as a unit, he commended the folks on the budget committee for doing that important work. He continued, one of the things that was passed to me a day or so ago, Governor Moore from the state of Maryland passed an executive order about 10 days ago that requires state agencies to prioritize Maryland's sourced wood products in public projects. So, what that essentially means is if there's any

kind of public project, they must go to Maryland suppliers to do that. So, my thought was, why can't we have that same kind of relationship when it comes to food banks that must purchase food? Why aren't we doing more of that? How can we mandate that? What is it that we can do collectively to ensure that farmers are getting the first crack at any food that must be purchased with state dollars? It's just something to think about on the ride home, to have a Governor be that active in forestry makes me wonder why we can't have a Governor that active in doing things to be able to help our commodity.

Joel Viereck reported that the Budget Committee did meet. We did review both Plant and Animal Health divisions. He noted that they are seeing a lot of the same themes throughout it, which we will report on once we finish up with Food and Nutrition. He reported that the work of the committee is just establishing what's commonplace, what could be cleaned up, what could be done better, and he noted that it is a lot of work on Tony's behalf. I don't think anything like this has been done before. I think we had a conversation about that, Holly, that you were on budget your first term, the Board did not do anything quite like this. So, this is something a little bit different, but we're hoping it's going to give us the tools we need to move forward. After the review of Food & Nutrition we will be wrapping this up and identifying some risks and some improvements, overall, to make this work a little bit smoother in the future. It was reported that applications had been received for the new Confidential Assistant that will be working with Tameko, the panel has been set and the questions are ready. It is hoped that interviews will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Joel Viereck also commented that the DEP Committee covered quite a bit of information. Something worth noting, though, is that the DEP NJ Real implementation has been delayed till July 2027, we will have a follow up meeting about this. There's also a public hearing that's scheduled for July 7th. But I'd like to go to set up a meeting with the committee. We'll kind of figure out what we want to do there. Other than that, though, we were working with Frank to set up the meetings as well. Hopefully going to ask some things, but we are going to be aggressive. I know Frank was asking for a time frame. I think 30 days is possible to get that all on and everything. We'll report back at the July meeting, the status of that meeting.

Steve Lee, Grants Committee, Specialty Crop Block Grants, those of you who are responsible for the applications, please try to get them done before the 10th of July, and that we will have a meeting, a special meeting of the committee to review those and then present those to the Board at the July meeting. It was noted that if you have any connection, you need to tell us now.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval – N.J.A.C 2:69–1.11 – Commercial Fertilizer & Soil Conditioners – Commercial Values

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board had a roll call vote and unanimously approved N.J.A.C 2:69–1.11 – Commercial Fertilizer & Soil Conditioners – Commercial Values as presented pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act.

NEW BUSINESS

Legal Authority concerning New World Screwworm

Dr. Patil reported that the Department has a quarantine authority under statute, and that quarantine authority is delegated by the Board, the state veterinarian, and under that authority he would like to implement something import restrictions on animals coming into New Jersey from US Screwworm infested areas in the United States. He wanted to talk with you about, you know, any specific concerns or questions you might have about it.

Hillary Barile asked, to clarify, the process is that Dr. Patil would quarantine something and then after that quarantine at our next meeting, this Board would have to approve that quarantine that he had instated. It's almost like he has a like a temporary quarantine authority and then if the Board wanted to revoke it because you disagree, then you still maintain that authority.

Chris LaRegina stated that we just wanted to make sure all the authorities are taken care of. When that happens, eventually, we'll want to make sure that the Board follows up on that immediately and authorizes it. Because of how fast it was moving, we were hoping maybe it would have been ready for today, but obviously it isn't. But we wanted to have it on the agenda in case it was because it's so important.

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to approve the authority.

Box Tree Moth

Joe Zoltowski presented the Board with a draft asking for amendments to the Box Tree moth Quarantine in Cape May County. This is to restrict movement of boxwood infested box tree moth or boxwood tree. To protect the nursery and landscape industries. At the end of May, we got official confirmation from the USDA identifier, came up with draft regulations to establish this quarantine, to restrict it. Right now, it's Cape May County. So, it's pretty much almost an island, you got three sides of the border. It's a small infestation, can handle it if we act quickly. It took us three weeks to get to this point. Yes, we have staff out there surveying, going through the survey today.

ON the MOTION of Hillary Barile, seconded Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to approve as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

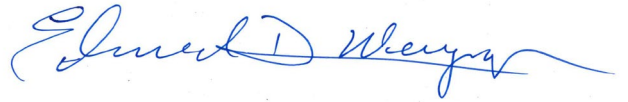
MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, July 22, 2026 at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, beginning at 1:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 4:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edward D. Wengryn", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward D. Wengryn