

2005 Economic Development Strategies

New Jersey Department of Agriculture

	<u>Year End Summary</u>
STRATEGIES COMPLETED:	57
STRATEGIES MAKING PROGRESS:	31
STRATEGIES WITHOUT PROGRESS:	<u>13</u>
Total Strategies	101

Fifty-seven of the Department's Economic Development strategies were successfully completed in 2005. Eighty-eight of the Department's strategies have been completed or are making progress toward completion.

For the year 2005, the Economic Development Work Team identified a total 101 strategies that would have a positive impact upon the economic return to New Jersey producers. The Economic Development Work Team consists of staff members from each of the Department's six divisions and Rutgers staff from the Food Policy Institute, the Food Innovation Center and the Cooperative Extension. The strategies, both big and small, consisted of new programs, ideas, and projects. Progress of each idea or program was tracked throughout the year.

During 2005, the expansion of the *Jersey Fresh* brand continued with the *development and implementation of the Jersey Grown, Jersey Seafood, Jersey Fresh Milk, Jersey Organic, Jersey Bred, and Jersey Fresh* label for wine. In 2005, new quality and freshness assurance grades were introduced and implemented for vine ripened tomatoes and peaches. The Department's Third-Party Certification program was expanded and national produce wholesalers were recruited for New Jersey growers.

In 2005, the Department developed and introduced new websites for the seafood and agri-tourism industries. These new websites, designed for both consumers and wholesale buyers, offer databases with detailed supplier information that can be cross-referenced by product and location.

The Department is working to develop a new meat goat industry in New Jersey and has established a new Agricultural Tourism Council. Organic growers now have access to a directory of organic food processors. More growers are better protected by crop insurance thanks to the Garden State Crop Insurance Education Initiative. State purchases of produce and horticultural products continued to be made through special purchasing guidelines established by the Department.

A list of 2005 Economic Development Strategy Year End Summaries is available from the NJDA for eleven of the State's agricultural industry sectors. For more information contact Logan Brown at 609 292-8856 or logan.brown@ag.state.nj.us.

General Strategies

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The Garden State Crop Insurance Education Initiative is a joint partnership between the Department, Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the USDA's Risk Management Agency. Through this educational program the crop insurance education team was able to build a rapport with government agencies, commodity organizations, crop insurance agents, agribusiness professionals and agricultural producers. The team was able to efficiently and effectively deliver timely and relevant crop insurance information to New Jersey producers. Delivery methods were tailored to fit each audience, such as speaking one-on-one with producers, presenting at commodity meetings, attending trade shows and conferences, and communicating the message through the media. The personal outreach effort reached a total of 773 producers. One-on-one contacts were also supported by a comprehensive communication plan, which included press releases, newsletters, bulletins, brochures and newspaper supplements in the *New Jersey Farmer* publication.

The Garden State Crop Insurance Education Initiative had a profound effect upon grower coverage. During the course of the 2004-05 grant year liability coverage for New Jersey farmers *increased by \$20 million* indicating that after this initiative New Jersey producers are now better protected with upgraded coverage. New Jersey now has the highest percentage increase in crop insurance policies purchased in the Mid-Atlantic region at 101 percent.

The Department of Agriculture is working with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Rutgers University, Farm Bureau and industry leaders on the Agriculture Development Initiative. This initiative is seeking to bring new products to market, explore financial incentives and expand access to markets. A major component of the strategy will be to implement a labor initiative to improve manager and worker productivity.

Progress was made 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 has been actively assisting farmers with issues related to agricultural production, taxation, regulations, economic development, value-added opportunities, as well as a variety of other matters that impact the long-term viability of New Jersey Agriculture.

The Department continues to support programs for worker training; worker health and safety, and farms labor housing. The Department supports reform of policies and procedures addressing temporary agricultural worker visas at the state and federal level.

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 state's rich farming heritage while encouraging the preservation of agricultural lands.

In 2005, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture supported the development of the 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 first cornerstones of the Agricultural Tourism Council was the establishment of a comprehensive website that brings together New Jersey's diverse agri-tourism opportunities. The website was introduced in 2005 and it 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 69 different products or activities. The interactive agri-tourism activities listed on the website include corn mazes, hayrides, school tours and birthday parties, just to name a few. Special items on the site include such items as Christmas trees and cornstalks, plus a total of 44 different produce items can be located. The website is located at:
www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/agritourismhome.htm

In support of New Jersey's agricultural tourism industry the State Agricultural Development Council has been working to strengthen "The Right to Farm Program," which is designed to work with and help educate farmers, residents, and municipalities about the Right to Farm Act, the Act's formal conflict resolution process, and additional strategies for resolving agricultural conflicts and maintaining a positive agricultural business environment. The Right to Farm Program's informal process involves participation in the Agricultural Mediation Program. This program is coordinated by the Right to Farm Program and is offered to all participants free of charge.

In addition to the agri-tourism website, the Department is hosting an online Agri-Tourism Calendar of Events featuring links to all upcoming agricultural festivals, events and agricultural demonstrations throughout New Jersey.

Dairy Industry

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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

In 2005, 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.

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.

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 to sustain a viable and thriving dairy industry in New Jersey. In 2005 the Department introduced a new website featuring all of the programs and services of the alliance. The website address is: <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/dairyalliance.htm>

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 value-added market potential for flavored milk was also evaluated, as was the concept of low-fat flavored milk for New Jersey's schools.

The Department continued its work to protect the health of the dairy industry from the threat of devastating and economically damaging diseases. Funding was secured for the Garden State Dairy Alliance Milk Quality Program to document the quality of raw and processed milk and milk products to assure the safety and wholesomeness of dairy products.

Two producer education seminars entitled "Improving Calf Management" were hosted in North and South Jersey. The seminars were well attended and the vast majority of New Jersey's dairy farms were represented among the attendees.

Work with Rutgers and NJ Farm Bureau was continued to promote the Financial Package Software known as the FINPAK Program that promotes good business practices through financial management analysis.

The Equine Industry
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New Jersey is one of the nation's 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 Department and the New Jersey Equine Advisory Board continue to develop new and innovative programs for the industry, as well as offering many promotional opportunities

In the past 10 years, the number of young adults participating in 4-H and FFA equine activities has more than doubled. In 2005, now competing at the national level, New Jersey's FFA Horse Team earned a silver medal at the Career Development Event. Fourteen 4-H members from New Jersey also attended the 2005 Eastern National 4-H Roundup. Each member of that team finished in a top place and every member returned with a ribbon or award.

As testimony to the strength of the state's equine industry, New Jersey has recently been named as the host for the upcoming 2007 Annual Breeder's Cup, one the most prestigious events in the thoroughbred industry.

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.

The Department created a website in 2005 to highlight New Jersey's horse farms. The website offers detailed information about the facilities and services available at each equine operation. The website is being upgraded to feature schedules of events, lists of horseback riding trails, and other industry related activities. The website will be used to link New Jersey equine breeders to racing sites.

The Department's equine programs bolstered promotion and educational efforts to stimulate interest in the equine industry and to attract new owners and create career opportunities. One such event was the *Jersey Fresh* festival, which attracted the public and provided educational and public relations opportunities for the equine industry.

The Horse Park of New Jersey continues to play a central role in New Jersey's equine industry. It serves as an important location for horse sales. The park has also been working toward attracting future Olympic equestrian events and has recently initiated efforts to expand the acreage of the park to accommodate even larger public events.

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 2005 organic growers and organic food processors were linked together, the production of edible soybeans was investigated, progress toward the construction of an ethanol plant continued and a list of organic hay producers was created.

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 helped to implement an organic research project at the Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station in Bridgeton. Conventional and certified organic production methods will be 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 is working to link growers of certified organic soybeans, corn and wheat to regional handlers and food processors of organic foods. To facilitate this link, a list of regional organic handlers and processors has been created and is available to growers through the Department. Through this link growers can find out more about the organic food industry and which organic grain crops are in demand.

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. Those facilities will need a readily available, local source of feedstock for their operations. Throughout 2005, the Department sought 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.

The Horticulture Industry
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The Department continued to ensure plant health for New Jersey's horticultural industry. New methods of pest control and beneficial insects were increased in 2005. 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 was continued to identify new varieties of agricultural products resistant to pests, diseases and new plant varieties.

In 2005 the *Jersey Grown* brand name continued to be strengthened. The *Jersey Grown* brand logo enables 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 product stickers, labels, tags, and signage.

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

The Department continued its work with the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection to use 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.

To educate and inform the consumers about the availability, variety and use of *Jersey Grown* horticultural products, the Department worked with the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association to distribute fact sheets and horticultural articles of interest.

In Middlesex and Union Counties, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture worked with federal partners to stop the Asian Long-Horned Beetle from devastating New Jersey's residential shade trees and urban forests. The tree-killing beetle was first sighted in Hoboken and Jersey City and following a comprehensive control effort, there have been more no signs of the beetle in those locations. With the mission accomplished, the Department of Agriculture and federal partners have deregulated Jersey City and Hoboken, ending the quarantine in the Hudson County area. Extensive surveys, program activities and tree removal continued in the Middlesex/Union County infestation area in 2005.

The Livestock and Poultry Industry
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In 2005 the Department continued its work to ensure animal health while enhancing industry marketing, encouraging production and examining new and non-traditional New Jersey livestock products and markets for those products. With the introduction of the *Jersey Bred* logo, which is now being promoted to the livestock industry, the successful *Jersey Fresh* brand has been extended to the livestock industry.

The Department has begun assisting farmers to develop and promote the quality of meat goats. This effort has been a direct result of the Department's Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program grant to study the economics of breeding and marketing meat goats in New Jersey. The primary markets for meat goats have also now been identified. The Department is currently working with dealers to coordinate the sale of goats to major retail distributors. The Department is working to match the farm management practices of the new and beginning farmers in New Jersey to include the feed out of goats on a seasonal basis. This will maximize inputs and reduce costs associated with feeding the ruminant animals. A significant new goat industry supported by marketing and educational programs is emerging from this project.

In 2005, the Department worked to update the state's livestock markets and help the industry to adapt their operations to better meet the particular needs of both traditional and ethnic markets. In addition to working to coordinate the sale of 4-H animals, the Department is working to establish commercial livestock sales at several locations throughout New Jersey. The Department has also begun working with New Jersey auction markets to coordinate and conduct graded livestock sales.

The Department continues to support the marketing of locally produced poultry meat and eggs. Laws and regulations that affect this industry are monitored to ensure that they address current industry models of production and distribution.

In response to the threat of Avian Influenza, the Department created a new website with information about the disease, how it spreads, its potential human impact plus detection, surveillance and testing programs for poultry. The website, complete with definition and links, is located at: <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/avianinfluenza.htm>

The Junior Breeder Program continued to grow in 2005. The program had its highest number of participants in 20 years and its first ever project animal market, which featured the sale of over a hundred goats, sheep, rabbits and chickens.

In 2005, the Department worked to implement the best management practices for bio-security to protect the health of the livestock and poultry industry from the immediate threat of devastating and economically damaging diseases. The Department continues to work with owners of livestock to assure awareness of disease threats and general animal safety measures.

The Organic Industry

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Organic foods continue to be very profitable and 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.

In 2005, the Department promoted and administered a cost-sharing program for the certification for organic operations. The Department prepared informational brochures and organic fact sheets fully integrating organic products into the *Jersey Fresh* promotional program.

Throughout the year the Department's outreach efforts educated growers and handlers about federal funds available to help offset organic certification costs. Through a cost-sharing agreement with the Department and the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), an organic operation is now eligible for a reimbursement of up to 75 percent of its certification costs, up to a limit of \$500.

For the past year, the Department has been working toward USDA accreditation of a State Certified Organic program to guarantee consumers the highest quality organic agricultural products. The program also provides farmers transitioning to organic production, or in the process of completing the three-year qualifying period, the ability to market their products as transitional sustainable.

Through the establishment of the *Jersey Organic* brand New Jersey grown organic products will soon be promoted as distinct from, and of higher value than, competing products. Ongoing efforts are integrating organic products into the Department's *Jersey Fresh* marketing program through the use of the *Jersey Organic* logo. In the very near future the proposed regulations for the State Organic Certification Program and the *Jersey Organic* marketing program are targeted for simultaneous publication. Once that rule is approved, the Department will begin distributing *Jersey Organic* price cards and other point of sale advertising materials directly to area retailers and restaurants.

The Produce Industry
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In 2005 the *Jersey Fresh* brand was strengthened in several ways. In addition to the continuing *Jersey Fresh* Quality Grading program, the Department also expanded its Third-Party Food Certification program. The Quality Grading program ensures the quality and freshness of produce shipped in *Jersey Fresh* boxes while the Department's Third Party Food Certification program offers growers an affordable way to provide retailers with trace-back ability and to ensure quality controls at all stages of production.

The Department has also introduced new quality assurance grades. The "Premium Jersey Fresh" peach grade requires that the fruit is packed and shipped within seven days. No other state has a freshness guarantee for their peaches. New strict labeling rules for vine-ripened tomatoes will ensure consumers that the best tomatoes are Jersey tomatoes. These new grades help growers command a premium price for a premium product.

Through trade shows, industry events, grower meetings and other activities the *Jersey Fresh* marketing staff continued to work directly with growers, wholesalers, retailers and the media on a daily basis. Every week, more than 340 produce retailers, wholesalers, members of the media, foodservice buyers and other industry contacts were e-mailed a *Jersey Fresh* availability and market report. The e-mail report provided weekly volume and pricing indicators on every *Jersey Fresh* commodity in production or about to enter production. In 2005, *Jersey Fresh* outreach efforts contacted a national asparagus wholesaler looking for a source to fill their April-June supply window. The wholesaler is now conducting grower meetings with and plans to begin sourcing product from New Jersey in 2006. The wholesaler's total seasonal demand for asparagus greatly exceeds New Jersey's current production by a magnitude of six.

Over \$1 million of New Jersey fruits and vegetables were purchased for the Department's School Nutrition Program for New Jersey's School Lunch Program. The Department coordinated the purchase of New Jersey blueberries, cucumbers, peaches, tomatoes and lettuces through the Department of Defense.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections continued its program to purchase under-valued and over-produced commodities directly from New Jersey farmers. Over \$200,000 of New Jersey produce was purchased through this program in 2005. Purchases included: 232,000 lbs. of tomatoes, 3,400 cases of lettuce, 2,500 cases of zucchini and 2,650 boxes of apples.

Efforts to expand markets for New Jersey produce continued last year with a new *Jersey Fresh* Hospitality Program, promotional efforts in Canada, the search for alternative crops, the establishment of new community markets and support for the Farmer's Nutrition Program which provides senior citizens and Woman, Infants, & Children nutritional program participants with produce coupons redeemable at certified farm markets throughout New Jersey.

Seafood Industry
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In 2005 the Department continued to promote the *Jersey Seafood* brand. The brand is positioned to promote locally grown products as distinct from, and of higher value than, competing products. To help consumers identify high value and healthy seafood products, the Department's Fish and Seafood Development Program has distributed *Jersey Seafood* point-of-purchase recipe cards and other point of sale advertising materials to retail stores throughout New Jersey. The Department's updated 2006 New Jersey Seafood Suppliers Directory has also been provided to buyers throughout the region.

The Department's seafood website at <http://www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov/> is an integral part of the promotional program. The website features preparation tips and recipes by local chefs and a video cooking presentation about the correct method to sauté New Jersey sea scallops. Important storing, handling and nutrition information is also provided on the website. The New Jersey seafood website provides seasonal availability information and an interactive calendar of New Jersey seafood related events. The detailed supplier database also provides product availability information, a list of online publications and a profile of New Jersey's aquaculture industry.

In support of New Jersey's growing aquaculture industry, the Department issued 172 aquatic farmer licenses including 154 shellfish growers (100 clams, 42 oysters and 12 clams & oysters), 14 finfish, and four for aquatic plant producers. To obtain an aquatic farmer license, growers must follow a set of Agricultural Management Practices and an Aquatic Organism Health Management Plan to protect wild stocks and the neighboring environment. Working with the Division of Animal Health, a protocol has been established to issue out-of-state import licenses for finfish. To date, eight out-of-state import permit applications have been submitted.

In 2005, the Department conducted focus groups on consumer perceptions of farm raised aquaculture products. In response to the results of these focus groups, educational materials have been developed and disseminated that directly addresses specific consumer questions and concerns about farm-raised seafood products.

The Department also supports seafood product exports to Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Through trade show booth subsidies, the program encourages the participation of seafood companies in international trade shows.

The Wine Industry

2005 Economic Development Strategies Year End Summary

The Department has expanded the *Jersey Fresh* program to include the many fruits produced in the Garden State. Garden State wine growers now have the opportunity to put the *Jersey Fresh* quality guarantee on bottles of wine. The *Jersey Fresh* label assures consumers of the highest standard of ingredients grown right here in New Jersey. The voluntary *Jersey Fresh* standards only apply to wine products which score at least a 13 out of 20 in the Quality Wine Alliance Program (QWA). 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.

In 2005, the Department started working with New Jersey's wine industry to expand the number and scope of eligible retail outlets to include community farmers markets. The Department is working to support the wine industry's effort to obtain licenses to distill fruit based spirits such as fruit brandies and grappa, an Italian brandy made from distilling the grape skins that remain after wine production. The issuance of the distiller's license would be limited to farm wineries that grow a minimum of 18 acres of grapes.

Working in conjunction with Food Export USA New Jersey and the Department, New Jersey wines received support for promotional activities in Central America, South America and the Pacific Rim. Through the Market Access Program's matched funds reimbursement program, overseas promotional activities of New Jersey wines included sample shipments, in-store tastings, foreign language label development and print advertising in magazines and newspapers.

The Department continues to seek market opportunities for New Jersey's wineries at domestic and international trade shows such as the U.S. Food Export Showcase in Chicago and the fancy Food Show in New York City. At those food industry trade shows the Department displays and distributes literature and information about New Jersey's wine industry.

To assist New Jersey's wine industry, the Department administers a promotion and research fund supported by per-gallon tax refunds 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