

Assistant Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
July 26, 2023

Farm To School – The Food and Nutrition Division's Farm to School Unit has reported to the USDA on the Local Food for Schools funding for Quarter 2 (April-June), when school districts procured New Jersey-grown food in the amount of almost \$152,000. Of this total, more than \$130,000 was purchased from small businesses and more than \$8,000 was purchased from socially disadvantaged producers. School districts purchased from a total of 63 producers, either directly or through a distributor.

Jersey Fresh Marketing – All 2023 "Grown Right. Here." creative materials are running including airplane banners, billboards and radio spots with new commodities running each week, bus posters in English and Spanish, and Cable TV spots. Marketing and Development Division staff coordinated and attended the Blueberry Giveaway Day on July 10 on boardwalks in Wildwood, Atlantic City and Seaside Heights in observance of National Blueberry Month. The response was overwhelming with 210 flats distributed. Grape Tomato and Peach days are happening on August 7 and 22 at the same locations.

Spotted Lanternfly – The Department has provided a funding opportunity to assist county and municipal governments in their efforts to slow the spread and reduce spotted lanternfly (SLF) populations. The Department proposes to assist New Jersey counties up to \$50,000 and municipalities up to \$15,000 by reimbursing efforts for costs they accrue for chemical treatment activities associated with spotted lanternfly control. To date, nearly \$2.2 million of state and federal funding has been encumbered to reimburse the 132 municipal and four county governmental agencies that have applied for this opportunity. Both NJDA and USDA APHIS PPQ field crews are working together to reduce SLF populations at high priority locations such as seaports, airports, train yards, highway rest stops and high-volume shipping operations to slow the spread of this pest. The spray season has begun and contact insecticides are being applied directly to control SLF nymphs.

Necropsy Testing and Pathology Examinations – The Division of Animal Health's Pathology Laboratory Section for the month of June 2023 completed a total of 261 tests and/or procedures. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), immunohistochemical, and parasitological preparation and evaluation, and these cases generated additional diagnostic tests for other laboratory sections (e.g., bacteriology, virology, and molecular). Results from these case submissions help to support practicing veterinarians (large, mixed, and small animals), private food and companion animal owners, NJ State Agencies, racetracks, wildlife, zoo, and nonprofit animal facilities. Cases involved diagnostic testing for disease and/or cause of death diagnosis and routine and/or sporadic disease surveillance for large and small ruminants, companion animals, and exotic/zoo species; sudden death with no clinical symptoms; assessment of backyard and small flock health issues; large scale flock disease; law enforcement forensic investigation and animals exhibiting neurologic symptoms.

Ag Education Vacancies – The end of the school year often brings teacher vacancies due to retirement or attrition. At the end of this past school year, eight agriculture teachers left their programs for a variety of reasons. For the upcoming school year, two new positions were added (one was filled, and one was just posted); two or three positions won't be filled; one position is still unfilled from last school year; four openings have been filled; and one is in the process of interviewing. Although the State Teach Ag Results Team (START) Program continues to create a greater awareness about the ag teacher demand, there are still challenges to ensure traditionally certified teachers are available to meet the demand.

Mexican Bean Beetle Program – The Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Lab (PABIL) produced nearly 98,000 *Pediobius foveolatus* adults from 3,900 mummies during the report period, putting production at maximum capacity. *Pediobius foveolatus* is a parasitoid wasp, originating from India, that attacks and kills

Mexican Bean Beetle (MBB). Since the wasp is unable to overwinter in New Jersey, PABIL maintains the colony perpetually and makes targeted releases throughout the state each summer to keep MBB populations suppressed. Plant Industry Division staff are monitoring 50 field locations in Central and Southern New Jersey.

Emergency Preparedness – The Division of Animal Health’s Emergency Preparedness Coordinator arranged for and conducted separate meetings with Cumberland and Atlantic County Offices of Emergency Management (OEM) to discuss its local animal emergency response plan and its current gaps and challenges. Atlantic County has a new County Animal Response Team (CART) leader, who participated in the meeting and determine necessary steps to continue the planning of the team operations and equipment needs. Part of the discussion at both counties included considerations for collaboration with neighboring teams, avenues of outreach, and regional exercise opportunities for both OEM staff and CART members. As planning continues for both counties, strategies for sheltering both pets and livestock will be the focus of the teams and the NJDA is available to provide resources and training.

Summer Food Service Program – The Food and Nutrition Division’s Summer Food Service Program has 171 approved sponsors for 2023, which includes 1,270 approved sites across the state. All pre-approval visits have been completed and no problems were identified. Throughout the month of July, TES/Summer Monitors and Nutrition Program Specialists will continue with assigned monitoring visits. Meetings are held bi-weekly with all staff to discuss site monitoring visits, and any concerns and or problems while in the field. Also, program staff participated in the Camden School District’s summer kick-off event on July 5 at Camden High School and the South Jersey Food Bank’s summer kick-off event on July 7 at the Camden Athletic Complex. Kick-off events are special events that start/kick-off the sponsors program operations. Representatives from the USDA, NJDA Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Joe Atchison III, and the Mayor of Camden were also in attendance.

Dairy Business Innovation Center Grants – Marketing and Development Division staff have distributed all Dairy Business Innovation Center (DBIC) grants to the various operations that could apply if they so desired. One large New Jersey milk dealer now with a Pennsylvania processing plant has been approved through the first round of a DBIC grant applied for that could incorporate a Jersey Fresh milk item. The grant application was for equipment needed to segregate milk at the processing plant.

Aquaculture Advisory Council – The New Jersey Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) held its third quarterly meeting of the year on Friday, July 21 at the Jacques Cousteau Educational Center in Tuckerton. Due to the meeting being held at the height of the summer field season, much of the agenda is a review of on-going research items and a check-in with industry members to gage the status of the current season, seeing if there are any issues that the AAC can address. The final 2023 meeting of the AAC is set for Friday, October 13th and will be held at the Cape-Atlantic Soil Conservation District Office in Mays Landing.