

EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

November 2008

*Mark Robson, Dean of Agricultural Programs*

For some time now, Mark and I have discussed the role of the experiment station and school in supporting agricultural education. We both see agriculture as an essential facet of our school's legacy and future. Our initiatives in food, health, and nutrition; climate and energy; and internationalization are intrinsically linked to the continuing viability and sustainability of agriculture and agricultural programs in New Jersey and more generally in densely populated regions world-wide.

To these ends, I have initiated a program to revitalize the Agricultural Science major, and I have asked Mark Robson, who has served with distinction as director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, to assume a new position as dean of agricultural programs to oversee the reimagining of undergraduate agricultural education. The new agricultural science major will be designed to appeal to those who are interested in an entrepreneurial and innovative education in the agricultural sciences. The major will target students who seek careers in agricultural education and extension, government service, and agribusiness, as well as those preparing to be an owner/operator of a farming enterprise. Areas of focus will include controlled-environment agriculture, agricultural policy and entrepreneurship, energy efficiency, natural resource management and niche agriculture, including agro-tourism, community-supported agriculture, and sustainable agriculture. There are also opportunities to fund international students in traditional agricultural programs, as well as in new and innovative programs related to agriculture. As part of our retooling of the major, we may also consider longer-range plans to include a master's degree in the business and science of agriculture, as well as enhanced nondegree certificate programs.

Mark has hit the ground running in this new position and has already held several productive meetings with faculty involved in the Agricultural Science major and together we have presented this idea to several stakeholder groups. In his new role, Mark will continue to report to me, and he will work closely with Jerry Kukor, dean of academic programs and research; faculty in several departments; extension agents throughout the state; and the Office of Academic Affairs. Building on his ability to forge strong partnerships, Mark will also engage practitioners in the field, government partners, county college partners, and likeminded institutions, such as Delaware Valley College. With these new responsibilities, Mark will hand over the reins of NJAES leadership to Larry Katz and Brad Hillman, both of whom will report directly to me. While their titles will not change, Larry's and Brad's responsibilities and authority for leadership will be expanded in their respective areas of cooperative extension and research. They will work closely with me to ensure that the extension and research components of the experiment station remain vibrant, productive, and integrated.



## *Spotlight on... From Our Farms*

**Luanne Hughes** (Gloucester County FCHS educator)

The "From Our Farms" program promotes improved nutrition and consumption of locally grown foods to help maintain the economic viability of local farms. The program offers a series of family-based activities through local libraries, childcare facilities, and preschools. From Our Farms is a compilation of fun, educational activities that use exploration and adventure to teach children about food, nutrition, and the farm. The curriculum uses hands-on activities and family literacy projects to reach children. The activities featured in this curriculum also help to prepare children for school by emphasizing math, reading, writing, and cognitive development. From Our Farms is a fun way for families and groups to spend time together, learn together, and explore together.

The target audience is children ages 3 to 8, their parents, and teachers. To date, more than 6,500 children have participated in From Our Farms since its launch in August 2000. This year, From Our Farms reached 400 children via Head Start classes conducted in conjunction with SNAP-ed (the new name for New Jersey's food stamp program). Survey responses of parents whose children participated in From Our Farms revealed that participation in the program resulted in these behavior changes:

- 75% reported that their child tried a new fruit or vegetable
- 34% prepared/cooked locally grown foods with their children
- 75% learned how fruits/vegetables grow
- 83% learned which fruits/vegetables grow in New Jersey
- 67% planted a garden or fruit/vegetable plants
- 97% visited a farm stand or farm market
- 99% purchased "Jersey Fresh" produce

## *Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments*

The following individuals won awards at the 2008 Galaxy Conference in Indianapolis, IN, September 14–19:

**Laura Bovitz** (Middlesex County 4-H agent), **Abigail Kesely** (Middlesex County 4-H program assistant), **William Hlubik** (Middlesex County agricultural agent), **Rich Weidman** (Middlesex County ARMA program associate), **Patricia Brennan** (Morris County FCHS educator), **Barbara O'Neill** (specialist in financial resource management), **Mary Cummings** (Gloucester County ARMA program associate), **Karen Ensle** (Union County FCHS educator), **Rachel Lyons** (Morris County 4-H agent), **Karen Mansue** (Ocean County 4-H program associate), **Kathleen Morgan** (Family and Community Health Sciences), **Jeannette Rea-Keywood** (Cumberland County 4-H agent), **Linda Strieter** (Gloucester County 4-H agent), **Margaret (Peggy) McKee** (Gloucester County 4-H program associate), **Luanne Hughes** (Gloucester County FCHS educator), and **Alayne Torretta** (Warren County 4-H agent).





A memorandum of understanding between Rutgers University and USDA APHIS-PPQ concerning the development of a new plant biosecurity certificate program was signed by Executive Dean **Robert M. Goodman** and Victor Harabin (Eastern Regional Director of USDA APHIS-PPQ) on September 24. Present at the signing were **Rong Di** (Plant Biology and Pathology), **Jim White** (Plant Biology and Pathology), **George Hamilton** (Entomology), and Gordon Gordh (USDA APHIS National Science Advisor). Rong Di is developing a new course titled

"Plant biosecurity issues and technologies" to be offered in spring 2009. This course will be part of the new certificate program. (Photo: Representatives from USDA APHIS with George Hamilton, Dean Goodman, and Rong Di.)

**Brian Schilling** (Food Policy Institute) was invited to join the Princeton Agricultural Association, a society organized in 1867. Schilling also joined the Board of Trustees of the New Jersey Museum of Agriculture.

## Grants

**Albrecht Koppenhöfer** and B.A. McGraw received \$5,500 for "Development of a nondestructive sampling/monitoring program for annual bluegrass weevil on golf course fairway," from the Tri-State Turf Research Foundation for 2008.

**Tom Manning** (NJAES project engineer) in collaboration with **A. J. Both** (extension specialist in controlled-environment engineering) and **Jack Rabin** (NJAES associate director) received \$20,397 per year for 3 years for "Energy Audits as a Tool for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Intensive Agriculture," funded by the NRCS USDA Conservation Innovation Grants Program.

**Jack Rabin** received \$15,000 per year for 3 years for "Sustaining Farming on New Jersey's Urban Fringe," funded by USDA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.

**Jack Rabin** and **Andy Wyenandt** (extension specialist in vegetable pathology) received \$25,000 per year for 3 years for "Establishing NJ Sustainable, Organic, and Alternative Research Project," funded by USDA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.

**Jack Rabin**, in collaboration with **Michelle Infante-Casella** (Gloucester County agricultural agent), **Wes Kline** (Cumberland County agricultural agent), **Peter Nitzsche** (Morris County agricultural agent), **Tom Orton** (extension specialist in vegetables), and **Beverly Tepper** (Food Science) received \$20,790 for the period 3/1/08–12/31/08 for "Baseline Evaluation of Market Tomato F-1s: Field Performance, Taste Attributes, & Consumer Culinary Preferences," funded by Seminis Seed, Monsanto Co.

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**Donald Schaffner** (specialist in food science; collaborator) received \$169,054 for "Investigation of Norovirus Cross-contamination during Foodservice Procedures from the USDA CSREES Integrated Research, Education and Extension Competitive Grants Program for 09/08–8/11.

**Donald Schaffner** (co-program director) received \$594,971 for "Retail-Foodservice Food Safety Consortium" from the USDA CSREES Integrated Research, Education and Extension Competitive Grants Program.

### *Outreach Efforts: Public/Community Service*



**Michelle Infante-Casella** (Gloucester County agricultural agent) organized and presented an educational program to over 400 participants at the Woolwich Township Tomato and Heritage Festival on August 2. The "Rediscovering the Jersey Tomato" project was presented, information on the 'Ramapo' tomato was highlighted, and five tomato varieties were evaluated through a public taste test.

(Photo: Melanie Gordon Photography)



On November 3, students and faculty from the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station participated in a gleaning at Giamarese Farms. The volunteers collected greens from the fields in conjunction with Farmers Against Hunger to provide hungry families with fresh produce. This is part of a larger initiative at the university called Rutgers Against Hunger ([www.rah.rutgers.edu](http://www.rah.rutgers.edu)).

(Photo: Jim Giamarese, President McCormick, Dean Goodman, and Brian Schilling listen as Judy Grignon from Farmers Against Hunger speaks.)

**Jack Rabin** hosted the New Jersey Restaurant Association Board of Directors Summer Mixer on August 4 on the G. H. Cook Campus. The purpose is improved linkage of Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension programs and distribution of local agricultural products to the region's large hospitality/food service sector.

The **Seventh Annual Cream Ridge Nursery Research and Extension Meeting** was held at the Rutgers Fruit & Ornamental Research Extension Center, Upper Freehold Township, on August 28. Over 75 growers, researchers, and educators attended this educational and research showcase for the ornamental nursery industry, which was coordinated by **Richard Obal** (Monmouth County agricultural and resource management agent) in cooperation with the New Jersey Nursery and

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Landscape Association. **Mark Robson** (director of NJAES) welcomed the participants and gave an update on the vision and direction of the ornamental horticultural Research and Extension program. Presentation highlights included; "Overview of Nursery Water Issues" by **Chris Obropta** (specialist in water quality) who gave a concise overview of the regulatory process and the factors that will impact growers in the future; "Tree Species Selection for the Future" by **Jason Grabosky** (specialist in urban forestry), who outlined the current environmental and economic factors that will dictate the growing and marketing of woody plant material; **Cristi Palmer** (program manager for Rutgers IR-4), and **Tom Freiberger** (IR-4 research supervisor), who discussed current disease and insect research programs vital to the nursery industry. Other Rutgers faculty and staff who participated in the classroom presentations and field research and demonstration tours included **Gladis Zinati, Jim Lashomb, Steve Hart, Ann Gould, and Richard Buckley.**

**Jenny Carleo** (Cape May County agricultural agent) hosted a "Farmland Tax Assessment" workshop on September 4 in Cape May Court House, NJ. Nearly 150 attended.

## *Mark Your Calendars!*

### **South Jersey Landscape Conference and Nursery Growers Meeting**

**WHEN:** December 3, 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Masso's Crystal Manor, South Delsea Drive, Glassboro, NJ

**WHAT:** All-day conference for nursery growers and landscapers. The morning session will focus on general topics. The afternoon will be split into two concurrent sessions one for growers and one for landscapers.

**MORE INFO:** njnla1@aol.com; phone: 1-800-314-4836.

### **Annual Equine Science Update**

**WHEN:** December 9, 6–9 p.m.

**WHERE:** Cook Campus Center on Rutgers G.H. Cook Campus

**WHAT:** The Equine Science Update, geared to professionals, horse owners, farm owners and managers, students, science teachers, 4-H horse program participants and educators, will include presentations highlighting the Equine Science Center's work in advancing equine health, horse management practices, and solutions to equine industry issues. The event starts with a supper at 6 p.m. Optional tours prior to the update include a visit to the current crop of weanlings in the Young Horse Teaching and Research Program at 4 p.m. and a demonstration of the center's high-speed equine treadmill at 5 p.m. The seminars and tours require reservations, which can be made by calling 732-932-9419 or emailing ESC@njaes.rutgers.edu. The suggested donation for the day's activities, including the supper, is \$25 for adults and \$10 for students.

This report is produced by the Office of Communications. For information or to provide comments, please contact Amanda Kolling at [kolling@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:kolling@njaes.rutgers.edu) or 732-932-7000, ext. 4205.

