The Annual Great Tomato Tasting was held on August 26 at the Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown and drew approximately 1,600 attendees who enjoyed the tasting of both heirloom and hybrid tomatoes and wagon tours of the farm's research plots. The event was conducted this year under brilliant skies and featured staples like the Melda C. Snyder Teaching Garden which showcased its “chef” gardens of heirloom vegetables, a children’s garden, deer tolerant landscape plants, and award-winning Jersey Grown™ daylilies. In addition, attendees learned about the farm’s ornamental plant and blueberry breeding programs and the columnar varieties of peach trees for the home landscape from faculty members and farm staff available throughout the event to discuss the wide-ranging work of the farm. New varieties of basil from the breeding program as well as new varieties of apples and peaches were unveiled at the tomato tasting event.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the Snyder Farm as a Rutgers Center for Sustainable Agriculture. To mark the milestone, a special program was held prior to the tomato tasting to honor the generosity and vision of Clifford E. and Melda C. Snyder who bequeathed their farm to Rutgers in 1988 and to pay tribute to the Honorable Wesley Lance and family, which handled the bequest of the Snyder estate to the university. Rutgers President Richard L. McCormick presented a special anniversary plaque to Congressman Leonard Lance, champion of the environment and agriculture throughout his public life, and son of Wesley Lance. In paying tribute to the Lance Family, McCormick said, “Your family cared deeply about the future of Snyder Farm, and Rutgers has honored that commitment by putting the farm to the best long-term use on behalf of all the people of New Jersey.”
Spotlight on FIC Community Farmers Market Report

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) has just released the findings of an in-depth study titled *New Opportunities for New Jersey Community Farmers Markets*. The study was led by Diane Holtaway (associate director of Client Services) with support from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Rutgers Food Policy Institute, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services. The project was made possible through a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant.

Key findings of the study provide a clear picture of the actions taken by successful farmers market vendors and managers. The study found that seventy-one percent of farmers that participated in community farmers markets and other wholesale channels reported higher profits from community farmers markets, and one third of those participants surveyed reported that their sales at farmers markets represented at least fifty percent of their gross farm income.

Overall, participants valued the farmers market venue for its ability to give them a better sense of what the average consumer is looking to purchase. The study also took a look at average sales per week and the cost of participation for a vendor.

With at least 130 farmers markets operating throughout New Jersey today, this report should prove highly valuable to those involved, or looking to become involved, in community farmers markets, whether in a vendor or market management position. Much insight was also gained from farm market managers. The study found that many managers work on a part-time or volunteer basis and see their work as a form of public service in helping to preserve small family farms and providing access to healthy, fresh, locally-grown foods. This study, as well as others cited in the report, has identified the market manager as a key factor to the success of any community farmers market. Markets must rely on a competent manager to organize and operate the market throughout the operational season. Key market manager duties include recruitment, site layout, stall assignment, contracting, risk management, promotion and many other tasks.

The FIC study generated initial media interest from the *Press of Atlantic City*, the New Jersey Farmer, and *AllBusiness.com*, an online resource for small businesses. As a result of the findings, FIC created two web-based courses, one specifically designed for farmers and vendors and the other for sponsors and managers. The courses are available at the FIC website.


Congratulations to Lucas Greehouses!

Lucas Greenhouses, run by George and Louise Lucas of Monroeville, Gloucester County, has been named national *Greenhouse Grower of the Year* by Greenhouse Magazine. George Lucas serves as a director of the Gloucester County Board of Agriculture, the advisory committee for RCE of Gloucester County, and his operations have been used extensively as a demonstration facility in RCE’s extension greenhouse education programs run by Michelle Infante-Casella (Gloucester County agricultural agent), Jenny Carleo (Cape May County agricultural agent) and A.J. Both (extension greenhouse specialist). Lucas Greenhouses have been used for multiple RCE tours, such as the USDA-SARE and NJ Agribusiness Association tours. New Jersey had an outstanding list of entries, with two of the four finalists in this competition. Kube Pak of Allentown, NJ also distinguished itself by being named a finalist in the national Greenhouse Grower of the Year category.
RAREC Tomato Evaluations in Upper Deerfield

The sixth annual tomato tasting was held August 18 at the Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Upper Deerfield. Over one hundred and fifty consumers participated in this annual event, evaluating 24 round red, grape and cherry tomato varieties for flavor at this annual event. The goal of the evaluations was to identify the varieties that consumers prefer and that have the “old Jersey tomato flavor.” The highest-scoring varieties are added to the Rutgers recommended variety list for commercial growers and home gardeners. According to Wesley Kline (Cumberland County agricultural agent), “these tomato evaluation events serve not only our research aims, but demonstrate to the general public how Rutgers’ research serves them.”

Outreach Efforts: Public/Community Service

Rutgers Cooperative Extension held a Bio-Energy Crops Twilight Meeting in conjunction with the NJ Grain and Forage Producers at the Rutgers Plant Science Research Farm in Adelphia on August 4. Bill Sciarappa (Monmouth County agricultural and resource management agent) and Bill Bamka (Burlington County agricultural and resource management agent) coordinated a BBQ seminar that began with an overview of bio-energy crops by Zane Helsel (Plant Biology and Pathology). Agency interest and partnerships were discussed by participants, including Tom Beaver of the NJ Farm Bureau, Bob Freiberger, President of the Forage and Grain Association, Tim Dey and Troy Joshua of the USDA, and representatives from the NJDA. Bill Meyer and Stacy Bonos (Plant Biology and Pathology) led the group of 40 participants over to the bio-energy and sustainable research plots inhabiting the 250 acre research farm. Exciting results were seen in the switchgrass variety trials and the Miscanthus fertility blocks – M. giganteus – growing to 12 feet and more. Tours of the sustainable pasture grass plots for equine operations, teff germplasm plots for hay production, and pecan and hazelnut crops for oil production also led to considerable group discussion in the field.
The Rutgers Water Resources Program partnered with Bill Sciarappa (Monmouth County agricultural and resource management agent) and Vivian Quinn (RCE program assistant) to present the first pilot training session at the RCE Agriculture Building in Monmouth County on August 5 and 6. This newly-created program, led by Chris Obropta (specialist in water resources), consisted of an overview of stormwater runoff and watershed management by Obropta, rain garden planning by Amy Boyajian (program associate), engineering aspects of rain gardens by Greg Rusciano (resource management agent), rain garden construction approaches by Sciarappa, and horticultural selections and planting tips by Madeline Flahive DiNardo (Union County agent). Class evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and set a new standard in certifying 55 Rutgers rain garden specialists and educators to accelerate rain garden construction and water recharge throughout the region.

Mark Your Calendars!

Farm Equipment Demonstration at Snyder Farm
The Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown will conduct a small farm equipment demonstration, an intense one-day experience for beginning, 1st generation, or part-time farmers on October 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., rain or shine. This is an opportunity for farmers to experience and make better future judgments about selecting and investing in equipment necessary to enter profitable smaller-scale or part-time farming in New Jersey. This training provides comprehensive, hands-on experience, demonstrating the varieties of equipment used in successful operations and practical considerations like cost, time, value, safety, and convenience, especially important to small-scale, part-time farmers with limited resources. This demonstration is limited to 50 participants, so pre-registration is required. For more information, call 908-730-9419 or visit the Snyder Farm website.

Cold Frames: Extend the Vegetable and Flower Season
WHEN: September 26, 10:00 a.m. to noon
WHERE: Holly House at the Rutgers Gardens, 112 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick
MORE INFO: Contact Mary Ann Schrum at 732-932-8451 or schrum@aesop.rutgers.edu

New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers Fall Tour and Trade Show
When: October 3, 8:30 a.m. to 3: p.m.
Where: The Prefect Christmas Tree Farm, Phillipsburg, NJ
More Info: Contact Andrew Alpaugh at 609-397-0096

This report is produced by the Office of Communications. For information or to provide comments, please contact Paula Walcott-Quintin at quintin@aesop.rutgers.edu or 732-932-7000, ext. 4204.