

EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
June 2010

Spotlight on NJAES Efforts in Food and Nutrition

Within the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES), a number of well-established and new programs are available to New Jersey residents of all ages to access healthy, safe, and nutritious foods. Over the last several decades, Rutgers efforts to provide greater food security to New Jersey's most vulnerable populations and its food safety research in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture are among its programs with the greatest impact. As a continuing partner in New Jersey's future, NJAES's more recent efforts include urban agriculture initiatives focused around increasing access to healthy food and nutrition education. Its community-supported gardens, youth farmstands, and farmers markets are newer initiatives launched by the experiment station that are intended to impact the health and nutrition of whole communities, especially our limited-resource populations across the state.

In this issue, we highlight just some of the wide range of NJAES activities, some long-established and others more recent initiatives, that foster greater food security and food safety for New Jersey residents.

EFNEP & SNAP-Ed Programs Sustain Vulnerable Communities

The statewide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) are operated through Rutgers Cooperative Extension, under the direction of the **Department of Nutritional Sciences** at Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. Both programs are USDA-funded and provide practical nutrition lessons to limited-resource individuals and families throughout New Jersey. That is, they teach people to identify resources that will enable them to feed their families, cook family favorites on a tight budget, and help their kids stay at a healthy weight.

SNAP-Ed was first funded by a grant received by **Deborah Palmer**, professor in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the school, in 1997. Since then, it has grown into an more than \$7.1



SNAP - Ed
NJ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education
USDA, Food and Nutrition Service

million dollars program supported by federal funds, with matching in-kind contributions from state, county, and municipal sources. This program serves New Jersey residents participating in SNAP (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program). Last year, SNAP-

Ed served 4,219 adults and 42,684 youth in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Union, and Warren counties, with plans to go statewide in the next year.



**Expanded Food and Nutrition
Education Program**

EFNEP has been helping New Jersey limited-resource families and youth eat better since 1969. During last year alone, a total of 14,757 nutrition lessons were delivered to 2,681 adults and 7,356 youth from

Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, and Passaic counties. Learn more on the impact of these programs at <http://www.njsnap-ed.org/>

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School Lunch Partnership with NJDA Keeps Kids Safe

Since 1979, **Henryk Daun** (professor, **Department of Food Science**) has worked to ensure that food served to students in cafeterias is nutritious and safe for consumption through the Quality Food Audit, an important part of the New Jersey Food Distribution Program (NJFDP). The NJFDP is an initiative through the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) that provides over 35 million pounds of U.S. Department of Agriculture food commodities, valued at nearly \$20 million, to more than 700 participating school districts, child and adult day care centers, camps, and charitable institutions throughout the state. Schools are



the largest recipient of these food distributions, serving over 555,000 lunches daily through this program. Daun, his associate **Paul Takhistov** (professor, Department of Food Science), and graduate student volunteers evaluate the food's nutritional value, packaging, and serving size. This project helps food processors meet new federal and state requirements related to the prevention of obesity in school children. The main goals of the Quality Food Audit are to evaluate and recommend samples of food products to be distributed, as well as to address food quality complaints of food distributed through the NJFDP. The relationship between NJDA and Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences is unique in the country.

Rutgers Against Hunger Supports Community Food Banks

Eating a healthy and nutritious diet is a common challenge for many Americans who struggle with obesity and diet-related illnesses like type-2 diabetes and heart disease. In the wake of a greatly weakened national economy, New Jersey saw a 25 percent increase in the number of people in need of food assistance, just as food supplies and donations saw its worst decline in recent years. In response, Rutgers implemented **Rutgers Against Hunger** (RAH), a university-wide initiative launched in 2008 to raise increased awareness of hunger and food insecurity, encourage activism and service to tackle hunger, stimulate research to assist those in need, and provide immediate relief through food drives, gleaning activities at local farms, and other events to raise money and collect food. With the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences paving the way in research, education, and outreach, RAH is meeting its goal of raising awareness of food security and increasing household access to fresh, wholesome produce, and will ultimately have a lasting effect in New Jersey. Learn more at <http://rah.rutgers.edu/>



Community Farmers Market Provides Fresh Produce and More



The **New Brunswick Community Farmers Market**, launched in July 2009, is operated by the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and NJAES, thanks to a generous grant from Johnson and Johnson and with the support of the city of New Brunswick. It strives to support the development of a sustainable community by bringing healthy food from local farms to families and households across the city of New Brunswick. Its mission is to instill healthy eating habits by focusing on nutritional issues that plague the community and



creating habits that can last a lifetime. In addition, the market aims to improve access to fresh and healthy foods in the community, where access is most limited, and to facilitate environmental, health promotion, and community development that empower and strengthen the capacity of small regional farmers. As a part of the Rutgers community, the market is a proud partner with RAH throughout the course of the market season, which runs from June through October. USDA figures show that there are more than 4,600 farmers markets operating throughout the United States, with over 130 farmers markets operating in New Jersey alone. Rutgers operates two farmers markets; in 2008, the **Rutgers Gardens' Farmers Market** on Ryders Lane was launched as a partnership between the gardens and NJAES.

Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

Program Wins Two National Awards



[Get Moving-Get Healthy New Jersey](#), a health and nutrition promotion initiative developed by Rutgers Cooperative Extension's **Department of Family and Community Health Sciences** and the **Department of 4-H Youth Development**, won two recent national awards. The initiative won the Presidents' Circle Nutrition Education Award presented by the American Dietetic Association and the Society of Nutrition Education Public Health

Division award for Outstanding Public Health Nutrition Program. The mission of the program is to improve the health of New Jersey youth, individuals, families, and communities by teaching them how to make healthy eating and physical activity part of their daily lives. To achieve this, Rutgers Cooperative Extension works with a partnership of state and local government agencies, professional groups, private organizations, and businesses.

Rachael Winfree (Entomology) and colleagues received a number of recent grants:

- "Strategies for promoting reliable crop pollination by native bees." A grant of \$400,000 from USDA AFRI.
- "Developing science-based pollinator restoration protocols for use in Farm Bill conservation programs." A Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant of \$32,304 from the State of New Jersey.
- "Conserving native bees and valuing their services for sustainable specialty crop production." A grant worth \$50,000 from the USDA-SCRI-CAP Planning Grant.

George Hamilton (extension specialist in pest management) received a USDA Extension IPM grant of \$103,000 for "Extension IPM coordination in New Jersey" for 2010.

Cesar Rodriguez-Saona (assistant professor of Entomology and Ecology and Evolution; and entomology specialist at the **Rutgers Marucci Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension Center** in Chatsworth, NJ) and colleagues received several new grants:

- "Evaluating new tools to better monitor and control plum curculio populations in blueberries." A grant of \$10,000 from the New Jersey Blueberry Research Council Inc.
- "Evaluating cranberry resistance to insect pests and color traps for monitoring blunt-nosed leafhopper populations." A grant of \$7,778 from the New Jersey Cranberry Research Council Inc.



- "Evaluation of new reduced-risk insecticides for efficacy against *Sparganothis* fruitworm, a key pest of cranberries." A grant of \$5,186 from the Cranberry Institute.

Outreach Efforts: Public/Community Service

Food Waste Recycling Investment Forum

Food waste recycling is becoming a national trend with growing appeal for businesses that generate food waste. New Jersey's first-ever Investment Forum for Food Waste Recycling was held on June 16 at the Cook Campus Center, New Brunswick. The forum, a creation of [Rutgers University's Solid Waste Resource Renewal Group](#) (SWRRG), explored the unparalleled financial opportunities for post-recession growth, particularly in the heavily populated and food waste dense State of New Jersey and the immediate surrounding region. It focused on the rapidly growing markets that convert something plentiful and local – food waste and other organic waste – into the soil, fertilizer, and energy products we all need to maintain our fast-paced lifestyle. The products, which can be made from food waste, represent every day, necessary products—fuel and energy products and soil amendments/fertilizers. [Read more.](#)



Plant Diagnostic and Soil Testing Labs

NJAES provides two important tools for Garden State residents looking to improve the quality of their soil and help their gardens flourish. The Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Lab and the Soil Testing Lab, both located on the George H. Cook Campus, cater to commercial farmers, small businesses, and individual residents. The labs treat and mitigate existing problems related to plants and diagnose soil needs to assure optimal growth. With the knowledge and expertise of these two Rutgers-based labs, farmers and recreational gardeners have everything at their fingertips to make their farms, gardens, lawns, and groves thrive, at a minimal cost.



[The Plant Diagnostic Laboratory and Nematode Detection Service](#), its full name, is a full-service plant health diagnostic facility with the mission to solve plant problems for the residents of New Jersey in an accurate and timely manner. The laboratory serves both residential and commercial plant managers in New Jersey and the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions. It also boasts clientele from as far away as California, Arizona, and Florida. Laboratory services include disease and insect pest diagnosis, plant and weed identification, insect identification, fungus and mold identification and nematode assays. Laboratory services are provided in cooperation with NJAES and RCE faculty and staff. Located off of Ryders Lane in New

Brunswick, the lab is housed at the university's Ralph Geiger Turfgrass Education Center, 20 Indyk-Engel Way, North Brunswick, NJ 08902.

[The Soil Testing Laboratory](#) provides chemical and mechanical analysis of soils for the residents of New Jersey and for Rutgers University researchers. Its mission is to provide accurate and timely soil test reports to meet the unique agricultural and environmental needs of New Jersey. "There's





a lot of interest now in nutrient management not only because of the benefits to plant growth, but also because of the environmental issues that are becoming apparent, especially in New Jersey with our dense population and development," explains **Stephanie Murphy**, Ph.D., director of the Soil Testing Laboratory. "We've been effective in demonstrating how nutrient management in the soil can help to improve water quality long-term." The lab is located at the Administrative Services Building II, 57 US Highway 1, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

Both labs are an integral part of the NJAES and the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, providing diagnostic and educational services in support of the teaching, research, and outreach efforts of the school and experiment station. The labs obtain a significant portion of their support through fees and work to attract grants and contracts from state and federal programs.

Mark Your Calendars!

County Fairs

It's that time of year again! County Fairs will be held across the state of New Jersey during the months of July and August. For summer fun and excitement at the perennial 4-H event, take part in a [County Fair](#) near you!

Rain Barrel Workshops

WHEN: June 26 and June 29, 2010.

WHERE: Multiple locations.

WHAT: Make your own reusable rain barrel to save water and prevent flooding and pollution at do-it-yourself workshops across NJ.

MORE INFO: http://water.rutgers.edu/Stormwater_Management/rainbarrels.html.

New Brunswick Community Farmers Market

WHEN: Open from June–October; Thursdays from 1–6:30 p.m. & Saturdays from 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

WHERE: 178 Jones Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

MORE INFO: Visit <http://nbcfarmersmarket.org/default.asp>.

For even more information on these calendar items and other events hosted and facilitated by Rutgers University, please visit the Rutgers Calendar at <http://ruevents.rutgers.edu/events/>.

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.

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