

EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
November 2010

Spotlight on 2nd Anniversary of Food Innovation Center

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) recently marked its second anniversary with a special event, "Tribute to the Past, Present and Future of Food Innovation in the Garden State."

According to **Margaret Brennan-Tonetta**, associate vice president for economic development at Rutgers University, "Since the center opened in 2001, and even more so since the food business incubation facility was opened two years ago, the Food Innovation Center has been a catalyst for new businesses and economic development in the state and the surrounding region."



Several of the more than 1,000 food companies that have benefited from the center's incubation services were on hand to participate in the celebrations. These incubated businesses included Schär USA, a leading European producer of gluten-free products that recently completed commercial runs of its first U.S.-

made frozen gluten-free breads and will soon begin production of gluten-free bagels. Schär USA plans to open a new 50,000 sq. ft. facility in New Jersey in 2011. In addition, First Field, a producer of gourmet ketchup and Twin Hens, a producer of gourmet pot pies, offered samples of their

food products that were developed at the center and shared with the audience the benefits they derived from being clients of the FIC.



Display features several food products from FIC clients

Food Innovators of the Past

The event paid tribute to the past by recognizing the food manufacturing companies that established New Jersey's reputation as the birthplace of several innovative food products and processes. These older, established food manufacturing companies were honored at the event

with historical displays and a mural that depicts many of New Jersey's pioneering food manufacturing companies. The mural, which was painted by local artist Sam Donovan, includes scenes from Campbell's Soup Company, the inventor of condensed soup; Seabrook Brothers & Sons, which produced the first package of commercial frozen vegetables in 1931; Cumberland Dairy, an early adopter of Ultra High Temperature Pasteurization; Violet Packaging, the largest



and longest running fresh tomato canner in the U.S.; and P.J. Ritter Company, which produced award-winning ketchup circa 1917 in its cannery along the Cohansey River in Bridgeton, New Jersey.



Lou Cooperhouse, recent director of the FIC, addresses guests in the building's lobby, which features a mural depicting pioneering food manufacturing companies from New Jersey

Celebrating USDA Grant

The successes of the FIC and its clients were acknowledged by numerous special guests at the event, including New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher; U. S. Congressman Frank A. LoBiondo; Assistant Deputy Administrator of Cooperative Programs, USDA Rural Development Andrew Jermolowicz; State Director of USDA Rural Development Howard Henderson;

representatives for U.S. Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez; and Mayor of Bridgeton Albert B. Kelly. During the anniversary event, these dignitaries and others also took part in a ceremony honoring the center's recent award of a \$225,000 USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant to establish a program to support the development of cooperative organizations throughout New Jersey.



Pictured during the presentation of the USDA check are, L-R Douglas Fisher, Andrew Jermolowicz, **Lou Cooperhouse**, Frank A. LoBiondo, **Margaret Brennan-Tonetta**, and Howard Henderson

FIC Bids Farewell to Lou Cooperhouse

On November 1, the Food Innovation Center (FIC) bid farewell to Lou Cooperhouse, whose affiliation with Rutgers and the FIC dates to the very beginning of its operations in 2001. Cooperhouse, who most recently served as FIC director, became the President and Chief Operating Officer of F&S Produce, a food processing company based in Rosenhayn, New Jersey. Under his leadership, the center became a model for regional economic development, garnering worldwide recognition and attracting over \$12 million in external funding for capital and operating needs. In recognition of its proven track record in providing business and technology expertise to small and mid-size food companies in New Jersey, the center was named "Incubator of the Year" by the National Business Incubation Association, in the services and manufacturing category. Among other honors, the FIC has also been recognized by USDA Rural Development as an "Agricultural Innovation Center Demonstration Program," one of 10 centers with this designation in the U.S.

Spotlight on Gleaning at Giamarese Farm

Rain – and the threat of possible thunderstorms – didn't deter a contingent of students, faculty and staff from taking part in the ancient practice of gleaning at Giamarese Farm in East Brunswick in late October, permitting them to give back to the community. More than 20



Gleaning peppers at Giamarese Farm in East Brunswick

enthusiastic gleaners from the George H. Cook Campus of Rutgers University spent the morning in the fields, harvesting 60 baskets of peppers in a patch that had been set aside by Jim Giamarese for the event. The green, red, yellow, and multicolor peppers were in prime condition, prompting one of the participants to observe that they could have been in the produce department at Wegmans. Instead, the peppers were destined for area food banks, including Elijah's Promise and the Franklin Food Bank.

The practice of gleaning dates back to the Old Testament, specifically referenced in the Book of Ruth, said Giamarese. He and his wife Sue are among the founders of Farmers Against Hunger, an organization that encourages farmers to donate late harvest produce to the needy. Farmers Against Hunger and **Rutgers Against Hunger (RAH)** were the sponsors of the gleaning, which was organized by the **Office of Community Engagement** at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES).

The event was reported extensively by local media, including the Home News Tribune and other Gannett newspapers, the Star-Ledger, NJN television, WMBC-TV, WCTC Radio, and the Daily Targum, Rutgers' student-run newspaper. **Larry Katz** (senior director, Rutgers Cooperative

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Extension and co-director of RAH) and **Jack Rabin** (director of farm programs for NJAES) were quoted liberally in the accounts. **Chelsea Simkins** (undergraduate, Environmental Policy, Institutions and Behavior and president of the Cook Chapter of Alpha Zeta honors and service fraternity) was interviewed on camera by NJN. The students at the gleaning were primarily members of Rabin's sustainable agriculture class, and members and alumni of Alpha Zeta.



The Star-Ledger quoted Katz as saying, "It's amazing how many kids are going to school hungry in New Jersey, and that's not conducive to learning." The newspaper went on to say: "He added that as part of the state university, improving the quality of life for residents is central to the organization's mission."

L-R: **Cael Sutherland** (Meteorology '11), **Sara McClurg** (Environmental Policy, Institutions and Behavior '11), **Jack Rabin**, and **Maryanna Tosi** (Nutrition '11)

The Home News Tribune quoted Rabin: "This is a great experience to put the



production side of our class together with the [concept] of farming being part of the community – and how you share back and forth both ways."

RAH was launched two years ago by Rutgers President Richard L. McCormick as a university-wide effort involving food drives, educational programs, and cooperative programs with farmers and gardeners to supply much needed food to the affiliates of the New Jersey Federation of Food Banks.

Farmers Against Hunger was created in 1996 as a non-profit organization, operating year-round to link farmers and retail outlets with soup kitchens and service organizations that serve the hungry. Since its inception, Farmers Against Hunger has collected and distributed more than 15 million pounds of produce, benefitting the state's neediest residents—children, seniors, and the working poor. [Read more.](#)

Andrei Olifer (Exercise Science '11), who grew up on a farm in the Ukraine, pulls cartful of peppers at Giamarese Farm

Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

FCHS and NJDA Collaborate on \$340,000 Federal Grant

Rutgers Cooperative Extension's **Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS)** has collaborated with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to secure a \$340,250 Team Nutrition Training Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. The two-year federal grant, which began on September 30, will be used to train foodservice professionals, increase fruit and vegetable consumption through school gardens and Farm to School programs, and promote the use of locally grown produce in school meals. The state Division of Food and Nutrition at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture invited the Rutgers FCHS to write the grant proposal, "Grow Healthy New Jersey: A Team Nutrition Initiative," to demonstrate the state's continued commitment to improving the nutritional habits of New Jersey's schoolchildren. The primary goal of the project is to train foodservice managers and staff to implement the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their operations in both school meals and à la carte offerings. [Read more.](#)



Master Gardeners Annual Fall Conference

The Fall Master Gardener Conference was held on the Rutgers New Brunswick Campus last month, attracting over 370 attendees to this annual event. Hosted by the Master Gardeners Association of New Jersey (MGANJ), the educational sessions at the conference provided active, certified Master Gardeners with an opportunity for continued professional development. The Master Gardener program trains volunteers in horticulture, home pest control, and



environmental resources, among other topics. Upon completion of their training, volunteers assist Rutgers Cooperative Extension in its mission to deliver science-based information to the general public. Last year alone, 18 county-based programs trained 369 new Master Gardener

interns. Certified Master Gardeners may continue their involvement in educational and service oriented outreach programs to retain their status. A total of 2,384 Certified Master Gardeners provided 157,809 hours of service during the past year, valued at nearly \$3.9 million. Established in 1984, the program has trained 6,220 volunteers since its inception. These volunteers have provided 1.52 million volunteer hours, valued at over \$25 million. MGANJ comprises representatives from each of the county Master Gardener programs, and includes designated **Rutgers Cooperative Extension** faculty and staff.

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Christopher Obropta (Environmental Sciences; Water Resources Program) and **Michele Bakacs** (agricultural and resource management agent, Union County) received a \$512,000 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection 319(h) grant titled "The Robinson's Branch Watershed stormwater management implementation project for Union County, New Jersey." Robinson's Branch is a tributary of the Rahway River. The goal of the grant is to design and install projects that address water quality and quantity problems that are ranked as priorities in the Regional Stormwater Management Plan in Clark and Rahway. The main focus will be to treat stormwater from roads and parking lots, using green infrastructure such as rain gardens, stormwater planters, and/or pervious pavement. The project will also provide incentives for local residents to control stormwater runoff and pollution from their own properties.

Mark Your Calendars!

35th Annual Green Exposition

WHEN: December 7–9, 2010

WHERE: Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

WHAT: Annual expo sponsored by the New Jersey Turfgrass Association.

MORE INFO: <http://www.njturfgrass.org/>.

On-Farm and Manure Composting School

WHEN: December 13–14, 2010, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

WHAT: A workshop, sponsored by the Rutgers NJAES Office of Continuing Professional Education, on the new rules that require New Jersey livestock farmers to develop and implement Animal Waste Management Plans to illustrate the responsible management of manure.

MORE INFO: Contact Dalynn Knigge, knigge@njaes.rutgers.edu, 732-932-9271, ext. 622.
<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/compost>.

Equine Science Update

WHEN: December 14, 2010, 6 to 9 p.m.

WHERE: Cook Campus Center, 59 Biel Road, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

WHAT: Tours and update on the NJAES Equine Science Center.

MORE INFO: Call 732-932-2658.

http://events.rutgers.edu/pdfs/poinsettia_open_house_2010.pdf

Basics of Turfgrass Management

WHEN: December 16, 2010, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHERE: Multiple locations on the New Brunswick campus.

WHAT: One-day program that introduces participants to a range of turfgrass management topics and practices.

MORE INFO: Contact Dan Serpico, serpico@njaes.rutgers.edu, 732-932-9271, ext. 648.

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.

