

EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
January 2012

Turf and Landscape Conference Attracts Near Record Attendance

The 36th Annual New Jersey Green Expo–Turf and Landscape Conference–was held on December 6-8 at the Taj Mahal Resort in Atlantic City, NJ. This regional event is one of the top turf and landscape conferences in the country and attracted more than 1,200 turfgrass managers from Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.



Mark Kuhns, certified golf course superintendent, Baltusrol Golf Club, making a presentation during the "Assistant Superintendent Career Workshop" session of the Expo.

This year's event was jointly hosted by the New Jersey Turfgrass Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey, the Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

More than 70 presentations from world renowned authorities in

turfgrass science were given at the three-day show. NJ Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney addressed conference attendees on Tuesday, December 6 and spoke about pending fertilizer and pesticide legislation and how it may impact the turfgrass industry.

A wide range of Rutgers faculty and staff presented cutting edge research topics that impact turfgrass managers in the region. They included **Richard Buckley** (director, Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Lab); **Bruce Clarke** (extension specialist in turfgrass pathology; director of the Center for Turfgrass Science); **Joseph Clark** (lab technician, Plant Biology and Pathology); **John Grande** (manager, Rutgers Snyder Research Farm); **Stephen Hart** (associate extension specialist in weed management); **Bingru Huang** (Plant Biology and Pathology; Ralph Geiger Endowed Chair in Turfgrass Science); **Albrecht Koppenhofer** (extension specialist in turf entomology); **Carrie Mansue** (field researcher, Plant Biology and Pathology); **William Meyer** (Plant Biology and Pathology); **James Murphy** (extension specialist in turf management); **Stephanie Murphy** (director, Rutgers Soil Testing Lab); **Brad Park** (lab researcher, Plant Biology and Pathology); and **Sabrina Tirpak** (lab technician, Plant Diagnostic Lab).

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A two-day trade show, showcasing new turf products and equipment from over 70 companies, was another major highlight of the conference. Unlike many turf and landscape shows in the



L-R: **Jim Murphy**, **Rich Buckley**, Chris Carson, past president of the New Jersey Turfgrass Foundation, **Bill Meyer**, **Brad Hillman** (director, Cooperative Research), and **Bruce Clarke**

country that have seen their attendance dwindle over the last few years, the New Jersey Green Expo continues to grow and prosper, thanks to the close partnership between Rutgers University and the \$3.2 billion turfgrass industry in the state.

Spotlight on "Agriculture in the Middle" Research

There is increasing national attention on the "agriculture in the middle" (AIM) sector, defined as mid-scale farms with gross sales of \$250,000 to \$1 million. New Jersey's "agriculture in the middle" sector accounts for 5% of all New Jersey farms; 32% of total cropland; and 25% of gross agricultural sales. This sector is important in terms of the sustainability of the agricultural supply



chain and infrastructure in New Jersey, yet is considered most at risk. AIM farms often lack the size to compete in economies of scale-driven commodity markets, and the resources needed to effectively diversify into higher-margin activities. In a 20-year period from 1987-2007, New Jersey saw a dramatic decline in the percentage of AIM farms - 10.3% to 4.9%. Continued losses may threaten the infrastructure needed to support the thousands of small farms that now make up the majority of agricultural operations in the state. NJAES currently has numerous programs to assist this sector, such as

agritourism, high tunnel and specialty crops research and extension, and the Food Innovation Center. The NJAES research team of **Margaret Brennan-Tonetta** (associate NJAES director for economic development), **Brian Schilling** (assistant extension specialist, agricultural economics and marketing), **Jack Rabin** (associate director, Farm Programs, NJAES), **Richard VanVranken** (agricultural and resource management agent, Atlantic County), **Lucas Marxen** (research analyst, Food Policy Institute-FPI), and **Kevin Sullivan** (research analyst, FPI) is seeking to better understand the financial structure, fiscal stability, characteristics, role, and threats to "agriculture in the middle" in New Jersey. This research will lead to NJAES programming that will specifically address AIM farms.



Spotlight

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe

Students enrolled in an eight-week class on “Sustainable Agriculture” that was taught by **Jack Rabin** (associate director, Farm Programs, NJAES), were asked at the end of the fall semester “...what courses would you recommend to someone preparing to become a successful urban fringe farmer?” Their recommendations, reported by Rabin in the current issue of his “Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe” newsletter, suggest that farmers need to know more than how to grow crops. See the courses they recommend below and read more at <http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/urbanfringe/pdfs/urbanfringe-v06n01.pdf>.

Courses Recommended for Individuals Preparing for Successful Urban Fringe Farming

Recommendations as a % of Total (n=60)	Courses Recommended
27% (16/60)	Economics, Business, Management, Marketing, Accounting
20% (12/60)	General Science, Nutrition, Resource Management, Statistics
17% (10/60)	Ag Technologies, specific Production Practices
17% (10/60)	Soils, Soil Science, Chemistry, Soil Conservation
12% (7/60)	Pest Management, Pathology, Weed Science, Weed Ecology
8% (5/60)	Plant Sciences



Students in **Jack Rabin's** “Sustainable Agriculture” class visit with Mark Carduner, owner of Silver Decoy Vineyard and Winery, in Hightstown, NJ.
Photo by Jack Rabin.

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Spotlight

New Director of Rutgers Food Innovation Center

Michael duBois has been appointed Director of the **Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC)**, which is located in Bridgeton, NJ. Michael is a globally respected leader in the food and food ingredients industries with over 25 years experience in building collaborative, committed



Michael duBois

organizations. A major focus of his career has been in the food ingredients category working for such companies as Firmenich (VP/general manager North America), Sensient (global president), and ConAgra (VP/general manager). Additionally, as CEO he managed two successful food companies, both of which were successful turn-around ventures. DuBois holds a master's of science degree in food science, has served on the Board of Trustees of the Institute of Food Technologists Foundation and on the Board of Governors of the Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association. His responsibilities as director include management of the Food Innovation Center operations, programs, and facility, as well as providing vision and leadership to establish the FIC as a nationally recognized center for value-added agriculture and food industry development. In addition, he will serve as

a liaison for the center to state, regional, and national food and agriculture communities, government agencies, and related organizations.

The Food Innovation Center, a key unit of the NJAES, is a food business incubator that is a boon to agriculture here in New Jersey, providing value-added food product development using Jersey Fresh and Jersey Grown products as well as business development consulting services.

According to the National Business Incubation Association, there are 7,000 business incubators worldwide, including fourteen in New Jersey alone. Few incubators focus on the food industry – and in this regard, the Rutgers Food Innovation Center is believed to be a unique model worldwide. The center opened its doors in 2001 and added a pilot food incubation facility that just celebrated its second anniversary last October – and is at full capacity. FIC offers product manufacturing in a USDA- and FDA-inspected facility and so far has assisted over 1,000 companies and entrepreneurs, including:



- already established food companies seeking to introduce new products and processes;
- startup food companies coping with challenges such as financing, technology, regulations, market development, and infrastructure requirements;
- farmers and cooperatives seeking to create new businesses based on value-added agricultural products or developing new markets for their existing commodities.

Read more on the FIC at <http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/>.

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Spotlight

Gleaning at Giamarese Farm for Area Food Banks

In the fall, Rutgers students, faculty and staff gathered at Giamarese Farms in East Brunswick, NJ,



to harvest collard greens and several varieties of apples for area food banks and Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick, NJ. Volunteers included members of Alpha Zeta honor society, **Jack Rabin** (associate, director, Farm Programs, NJAES) and students in his "Sustainable Agriculture" class; graduate students from the **Department of Food Science**; **Diana Urban Brown** (director, Office of Community Engagement (OCE)); **Diane Jones** (administrative assistant, OCE); and Kristina Guttadora, program director with Farmers Against Hunger, who coordinated the food donations.

Mark Your Calendars!

1st Annual Statewide Agritourism Conference

WHEN: January 24-26, 2012, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHAT: For prospective or current farmers working with agritourism and direct marketing.

MORE INFO: Contact Michelle Infante-Casella at minfante@njaes.rutgers.edu or call 856-307-6450, ext. 1.

http://events.rutgers.edu/pdfs/ATConference_Brochure_2.pdf.

Central Jersey Commercial Vegetable Growers Meeting

WHEN: February 3, 2012, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHERE: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County, 4000 Kozloski Road, Freehold, NJ.

MORE INFO: Contact Terry Hansen at thansen@co.monmouth.nj.us or call 732-431-7260.

<http://co.monmouth.nj.us/documents/57/CJVGA12.pdf>.

North Jersey Commercial Vegetable Growers Meeting

WHEN: February 15, 2012, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

WHERE: Snyder Research and Extension Farm, 140 Locust Road, Pittstown, NJ.

MORE INFO: Contact Diana Boesch at boesch@njaes.rutgers.edu or call 908-788-1339.

This report is produced by the Office of Communications and is available online at <http://execdeanagriculture.rutgers.edu/boa/>.

For information or to provide comments, please contact Paula Walcott-Quintin at quintin@aesop.rutgers.edu or 848-932-4204.

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