

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
September 2014

The USDA Northeast Climate Hub, a collaboration of USDA agencies, has announced new partnerships with 12 land grant universities in the Northeast that will give the region's farmers, foresters, and land managers better access to information and tools for adapting to climate and weather variability. The hub is one of seven around the U.S. formed to address increasing climate and weather-related risks to agriculture such as floods, droughts, extreme storms, fires, and invasive pests. Hosted by the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station, the Northeast Climate Hub is a partnership among the Forest Service, Agricultural Research Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other federal, state, and private organizations within the Northeast. **Marjorie Kaplan**, associate director of the Rutgers Climate Institute, will serve as Rutgers point of contact for the Climate Hub. Kaplan said, "Rutgers is thrilled to be a conduit of information between the Climate Hub and the agriculture and forestry community in New Jersey affected by a changing climate. We have been working with New Jersey stakeholders in our facilitation of the New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance to identify climate vulnerabilities of concern to them so we can develop tools, resources, and research most salient to addressing climate adaptation in New Jersey. We look forward to sharing not only what we have learned with our partners in the regional hub, but also leveraging regional expertise to better prepare New Jersey agriculture for a changing climate."

Shredded leaf mulch application is a worthwhile cultural practice for potatoes grown under organic conditions and the result is an increase in marketable product, not only in terms of higher yields but in the incidence of fewer culls. Field demonstrations conducted by retired Extension Specialist **Mel Henninger** and Agricultural Agent **David Lee** document potato varieties that were studied and the growing practices used for each variety. The aim of the field demonstrations is to assist Coastal Plain growers who wish to capitalize on the local niche market for organic potatoes. For organic production on New Jersey's Coastal Plain soils, the studies show significant increase in marketable yields over bare ground and black plastic production. It was found shredded leaf mulch application yields approached those of conventional bare ground plots. The full report and photos of the field trials are available at: <http://sustainable-farming.rutgers.edu/growing-potatoes-nj>.

Annie's Project New Jersey sponsored a free webinar on August 15 titled, "Go for the Goal: Business and Personal Finance Applications for Farm Women." Led by Extension Specialist in Financial Management **Barbara O'Neill**, the 60-minute webinar discussed the "nuts and bolts" of setting and achieving business and personal finance objectives. Cape May County Agricultural Agent **Jenny Carleo** managed the webinar, which had 160 participants from around the U.S. The \$97,715 grant for the 2014 webinar was sponsored by the USDA- Risk Management Agency. The webinar can be viewed at the "Go for the Goal" link on the Annie's Project website: <http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~farmmgmt/anniesproject.html>.

The third annual Open Space Pace (OSP) was held on September 20 at Freehold Raceway. Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County is an original member of the OSP Planning Group responsible for outreach education, ag communication, leading the State-approved County Fair designation, coordinating staff and volunteers as 4-H and Master Gardeners, and other tasks. Also, **Karyn Malinowski**, director of the Rutgers Equine Science Center, served as Grand Marshall for the event.

In August, seminars were presented by two candidates who are under consideration for the position of Extension Specialist in Nursery Production and Management. The seminars were held on the New Brunswick campus and at



the Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Upper Deerfield. An offer to one of the finalists is now proceeding, with an announcement possible by the end of the month.

Of Interest:

“Normal” weather is not usually noteworthy but a break from the New Jersey weather roller coaster of recent years is a welcome reprieve. New Jersey State Climatologist **Dave Robinson**, whose office is a unit of NJAES, summed up this summer’s weather in this way: “Perhaps the best word to describe the 2014 summer is ‘comfortable.’ Statistically, the primary word is ‘average.’ The total number of 90° days was below average throughout New Jersey. This followed four consecutive summers with temperatures averaging in the top 15, an unprecedented run of abnormal warmth.” With the weather a definite boon for direct marketers and agritourism operations, Robinson said, “Another characteristic of the summer of 2014 was the abundance of stellar weekend and holiday weather days.”

In the *Plant & Pest Advisory* On-Farm Food Safety blog, Senior Program Coordinator **Meredith Melendez** and Agricultural Agent **Wesley Kline** respond to growers’ inquiries on whether corrective actions from a third party audit still have to be taken if they already passed the audit. “If the corrective actions are not corrected or addressed prior to the next year’s audit there is the potential for the audit to not be completed. Auditors will arrive at the farm prepared to look at the previous year’s corrective actions and if they are not satisfactorily addressed the audit may be stopped. Corrective actions do not need to be fixed right away, but need to be addressed before the next audit.” **Kline** also advises that Fall is a good time to look at your operation and decide what should be changed to comply with a third party Good Agricultural and Good Handling Practices audit or to increase your score. Too many growers wait until May or June and expect to pass an audit. To keep up to date on food safety practices, subscribe to the *Plant & Pest Advisory* On-Farm Food Safety blog at: <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/category/commercial-ag-updates/food-safety>

Events:

Retail Marketing Conference for Farm Women

October 15, 2014, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Center
121 Northville Road
Bridgeton, NJ 08302

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/annies-project-new-jersey-presents-marketing-conference-for-farm-women-tickets-12977392731>

Visit our Rutgers NJAES online resources:

Vegetable Crops Online Resource Center: <http://niveg.rutgers.edu>

Plant & Pest Advisory: <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu>

Commercial Ag Updates: <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/?cat=139>

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe and blog: <http://sustainable-farming.rutgers.edu>

What’s in Season from the Garden State: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/archive.html>

