

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
June 2018



The Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) has gifted Rutgers a landmark grant of \$27,477,000 to support a major initiative to help revitalize one of Greece's most critical sectors—agriculture—by training and developing a new generation of farmers and inspiring agriculture and food entrepreneurs. The three-year project is spearheaded by Rutgers University–New Brunswick in partnership with the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) and American Farm School (AFS). The interdisciplinary team from Rutgers, AUA, and AFS will strive to create job opportunities for youth in agriculture, which is Greece's second-largest employer; help to prepare young workers for jobs at food-related businesses and family farms; and help them start their own businesses. SNF sought Rutgers' involvement due to its strong base of programs covering all the components needed to empower and recharge the youth, agricultural, and food sectors: youth engagement programs, business incubators in the food sector, new farmer trainings, extension services that support agriculture, and business support for entrepreneurs across the state. The program, titled *Recharging the Youth: New Agriculture for a New Generation*, will begin working with Greece's established infrastructure in food and agriculture, with initial steps aimed at putting real resources on the ground, developing training programs, identifying beneficiaries for the program, providing mentoring, and business training support. In 2015, SNF awarded Rutgers and its partners a \$2.1 million grant to begin planning the multiyear project. In the first phase, the partners conducted 20 studies on a range of sectors, such as alternative fruit crops, incubators, agritourism, Greek wine and spirits, technology, and aquaculture to determine the current state of the sectors, their growth potential, and their overall viability for employing Greek youth.



*Guests at Essex County RCE
listen to presentations on NJAES
urban programs.*

On June 12, the NJAES Board of Managers (BOM) hosted its fourth tour for legislators to enhance awareness of NJAES outreach and impacts around the state. Prior tours highlighted work in the agricultural, environmental, equine, and turf sectors at the research and extension centers in central and southern New Jersey. This fourth tour focused on the vast urban outreach taking place in the northeastern counties. The tour was co-sponsored by NJDA, SBOA, NJ Ag Society and NJAES BOM. At the Essex County Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) office in Roseland, over 20 senators, assembly persons, freeholders, legislative aides, county board of ag members, and others gathered for a briefing on the wealth of programs offered in North Jersey. RCE director **Larry Katz** gave an overview of the diverse programs conducted by the four extension departments: Family and Community Health Sciences, 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Office of Continuing Professional Education. Faculty and staff from those departments discussed their programs, which involved food waste in schools, support for out-of-school, disconnected and court involved youth, STEM programs for youth, horticultural programs for veterans and seniors, community gardening, SNAP-Education, urban agriculture, and community-based input landscape design.

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The Rutgers On-Farm Food Safety Team and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture are now carrying out On-Farm Readiness Reviews to help growers determine if they are ready for a Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Rule Inspection. The inspections will start in 2019 for operations with over \$500,000 in fresh produce sales. The reviews are free and confidential, and will take place during the 2018 growing season. Growers can sign up by calling 856-839-3377 or emailing Charlotte.Muetter@ag.nj.gov.

In September, **Alvaro Toledo** joined the faculty as assistant professor in the Department of Entomology. His primary focus is to establish a research program on Lyme disease, ticks, and the vector-borne pathogens at the Center for Vector Biology. He also investigates the role of cholesterol in the development of Lyme disease. June is the peak month for tick activity. With the identification of a new invasive species, the longhorned tick, and the spread of lone star tick populations from South to Central Jersey, expanding research in tick-borne diseases is timely.

The Indoor Cultivation Initiative (ICI) at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) started in November 2016 at the NJAES Research Greenhouses on the Cook Campus in New Brunswick. The primary focus of this initiative is to provide experiential learning opportunities for SEBS students involving several indoor cultivation systems, including the geponic and hydroponic (soil-less) plant production systems. The initiative also provides an opportunity to showcase indoor plant production systems to a wider audience. The ICI team released the first edition the *Indoor Cultivation Manual*, which will be revised and updated regularly. The ICI team includes ethnic crop research specialist **Albert Ayeni**, student assistant **Jonathan Dmitruck**, county agent (Monmouth) **William Sciarappa**, specialist in controlled environment engineering **A.J. Both**, and technical assistant (Monmouth) **Dennis McNamara**.

Of Interest:

The following new fact sheets are now available on NJAES Publications:

FS 1290 Identifying and Understanding False-Green Kyllinga in Cool-Season Turf. **Elmore, M.**, and **Murphy, J.** njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1290

FS1292 Drip Irrigation Inspection Checklist for Agriculture. **Yergeau, S.** njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1292

FS1293 Voles in the Orchard. **Polk, D.**, and **Gohil, H.** njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1293

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Office in Gloucester County has relocated to Shady Lane County Complex, 254 County House Road, Clarksboro, NJ 08020. Gloucester County agricultural agents **Michelle Infante-Casella** and **Hemant Gohil** and staff can be reached at a new phone number: 856-224-8040.

Events:

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Days, July 31, Golf & Fine Turf, Hort Farm 2, New Brunswick, NJ and August 1, Lawn, Landscape & Sports Fields, Adelpia Farm, Freehold, NJ. njta.wildapricot.org

