

EXECUTIVE DEAN OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
November 2018



*Sharice Richardson (l) and
Laura Mitchell represent
Rutgers at FFA.*

Students and staff of Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences attended the 91st National FFA Convention & Expo in Indianapolis in October. This year, the school's Office of Academic Programs participated as a vendor at the expo where academic dean, **Sharice Richardson**, and administrative assistant, **Laura Mitchell**, were able to engage with students from all over the country on what Rutgers has to offer. Among the thousands of students attending, there was a great representation from the school, including **Sydney Gavinelli** (Animal Sciences) and **Kelsey Stockton** (Environmental and Business Economics), who both earned one of the highest degrees in the National FFA Organization, the American FFA Degree, whose recipients show promise for the future and have gone above and beyond to achieve excellence. Stockton, who served as the 2017-2018 New Jersey State FFA Secretary

and the 2016-2017 Parliamentarian, also presented a student workshop session during the convention. **Brittany Smith** (Animal Sciences), the 2018-2019 New Jersey State FFA Secretary, and **Owen Donnelly**, Agriculture and Food Systems major, competed in the Dairy Cattle Evaluation and Management Career Development event. In addition, **Francesca Buchalski** (Animal Sciences), who is a student in the school's general honors program, competed in the Veterinary Science Agricultural Proficiency competition and earned an individual gold emblem.

The Rutgers On-Farm Food Safety Team, led by agricultural agents **Wes Kline** (Cumberland) and **Meredith Melendez** (Mercer), with support from program associate **Jennifer Matthews**, has been preparing New Jersey growers for FSMA through Produce Safety Alliance trainings, farm walk-throughs, and a website. For the trainings, educational workshops are developed based on industry needs and grower feedback through surveys and one-on-one communication. One-day workshops focus on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), USDA third-party audits or the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. For 2017-2018, six trainings were conducted, educating 212 participants and 113 farms, and four USDA audit grower trainings were held in three locations reaching 81 participants. The farm walk-throughs are based on the producer's need. Mock-audits, required prior to a third-party audit, are conducted using the audit checklist to assess the farms' preparedness. On-Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRR) are conducted in collaboration with the NJDA for farms who voluntarily sign-up for this service. For all farm visits, technical assistance is provided to help the farm prioritize the risks present in their production of fresh produce and the realistic means of improving their current operations. A total of 75 OFRRs were conducted this year. The website (onfarmfoodsafety.rutgers.edu) provides information on upcoming workshops, links to current FDA produce safety documents, USDA third-party audit resources, Rutgers produce safety fact sheets, sample forms, curriculum materials, presentations, and additional resources to help farmers assess and reduce human pathogen risks.

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Agricultural agent **Michelle Infante-Casella** (Gloucester) launched a new program in November to educate farmers about safety and health concerns related to hearing loss, sun protection, and silicosis. Infante-Casella serves as liaison for Rutgers to the Northeast Coalition for Farm Safety and Health with other land-grant university faculty. She hosted an educational display for the program and spoke with many farmers at the 100th convention of the New Jersey Farm Bureau in November.

Of Interest:

100 years of blueberry and cranberry research: The idea for Rutgers NJAES to establish a substation to study cranberry culture came about in 1913 and began with a research committee working on water supply, fertilizer, and insect problems. The work was turned over to the Entomology Department, and in 1918, the substation was established at Whitesbog, NJ. Although the substation originally focused solely on cranberry problems, research was gradually devoted to blueberries as the fledgling cultivated blueberry industry became more established. Today, the Rutgers NJAES Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension is located in Chatsworth, NJ, where researchers study cranberry and blueberry pests, diseases, breeding, pollinators, and the extraordinary health benefits of these fruits—supporting two of New Jersey's top agricultural commodities.

Ultra-Niche Crops: Creating a Business Plan certificate course walks growers through each component of a business plan and provides additional resources to answer challenging questions. This 30-minute course gives participants the opportunity to earn a certificate of completion, which may be used for educational requirements in some farm loans. Login: campus.extension.org/course/view.php?id=1517.

The following fact sheets are now available on NJAES Publications:

FS1297 Ultra-Niche Crops Series: Beach Plum. **Carleo, J., Gohil, H., and Melendez, M.**
njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1297

FS1298 Ultra-Niche Crops Series: Roselle (Hibiscus sabdariffa L.) Production and Marketing in New Jersey. **Ayeni, A., Melendez, M., Rysanek, A., and Sanders, M.** njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1298

FS1299 Ultra-Niche Crops Series: Pick-Your-Own (PYO) Blueberries. **Pavlis, G., Matthews, J., and Melendez, M.** njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1299

Events:

Rutgers Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics is presenting a one-day workshop, “Farming in New Jersey’s Cities and the Urban Fringe,” in New Brunswick, NJ, on Dec. 14. The workshop is designed to educate urban farmers on risk management strategies and provide tools for successful business management. Participants will gain the essentials from presentations by ag industry leaders to become better risk-takers and risk managers by focusing on issues that are relevant to urban farmers, such as soil quality, time management, food safety, and leasing land. Farmers will learn how to more effectively sustain their farm business by developing production and marketing plans, as well as using social media to sell their goods and services. For registration information, contact Danelle Miley at dmiley@sebs.rutgers.edu.

