A REPORT FROM THE

# EXECUTIVE DEAN
## OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture**
**July 2020**

### Introducing New NJAES Leadership

*Message from NJAES Interim Executive Director Laura Lawson*

*Laura Lawson*

As of July 1, I am honored to serve as the Interim Executive Dean of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and Interim Executive Director of the New Jersey Experiment Station. This is an opportunity to introduce or re-introduce myself to you and share a few words about the coming year. For the past ten years, I have enjoyed being a member of the SEBS community. In my time here, I have served as Professor, Chair, Dean of Agriculture and Urban Programs, and Dean of Academic Programs. I came to my academic career out of a love of teaching. My scholarship on urban agriculture and community open space has found a perfect home in the Garden State, and I've enjoyed working in many diverse communities across New Jersey. I take on this new role as interim executive dean because I know firsthand that there is no stopping our community's commitment to tackling critical challenges of our time–from climate change to food insecurity, from resource sustainability to human and animal wellness. And there is no doubt in my mind that our world needs the energy, passion, and vision within our school. We are well positioned to succeed in this shared enterprise, in part for having inherited a strong organization built by outgoing executive dean Bob Goodman, whom I'd like to publicly thank for his 15 years of service and commitment to SEBS and NJAES. A strong NJAES infrastructure of on-campus and outlying farms and centers continue to deliver on our historic mission and commitment to growing New Jersey's agricultural base and allied industries, while at the same time, furthering our reach into New Jersey communities served by dedicated Rutgers Cooperative Extension personnel and programs in all 21 counties. Read Lawson's full message.

Effective July 1, NJAES is being led by three senior associate directors: Wendie Cohick, as the Director of Research; Brian Schilling, who since 2018 has served as the Director of Cooperative Extension; and Peggy Brennan-Tonetta, who is serving in the newly-created position of Director of Administration and Strategic Development.

*Wendie Cohick*

**Wendie Cohick** has run a federally funded research program since joining the Rutgers faculty in 1996. She served as Chair of the Department of Animal Sciences and has served as Graduate Program Director of Endocrinology and Animal Biosciences. Cohick conducted her graduate training at major land-grant universities (Cornell and University of Illinois), and her postdoctoral training in endocrinology at UNC School of Medicine at Chapel Hill. The broad scope of her research program is directed at understanding the hormonal regulation of mammary gland physiology as it relates to normal growth, development, and lactation and how dysregulation of endocrine systems contributes to breast cancer.

*Peggy Brennan-Tonetta*

In her new role as Director of Administration and Strategic Development, **Margaret (Peggy) Brennan-Tonetta** will strategically deploy and utilize NJAES assets and budgets for on- and off-campus farms, research stations, incubators, and auxiliary units. She will work in concert with unit leadership to achieve the following: maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of operations; enable the support of cutting-edge research and outreach; and generate and promote meaningful economic development impacts. Additionally, Brennan-Tonetta will lead NJAES economic development programming, vastly expand NJAES state and federal government relations activities, as well as enhance NJAES engagement within the broader Rutgers New Brunswick community. This is a position for which she is well-suited, having established the first universitywide Office of Economic Development, which she led as Associate Vice President for Economic Development from 2010 through June 2019. She also has oversight of the university's internationally renowned business incubators–Rutgers Food Innovation Center which she established, and the Rutgers EcoComplex, as well as the NJAES Office of Research Analytics.

The **Rutgers University Center for Ocean Observing Leadership** (RUCOOL) and the **Rutgers Marine Field Station** (RUMFS) have collaborated with Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind to install a wind LiDAR (light detection and ranging) instrument alongside the causeway leading to RUMFS in Tuckerton, NJ. This fully autonomous sensor platform, owned and operated by Atlantic Shores, will provide observations of wind profiles up to several hundred feet in a location directly on the land/sea boundary. The LiDAR will be in place for the next several years, collecting real-time weather observations that contribute to ongoing research, monitoring modeling and data synthesis efforts of both Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind and Rutgers. This information will contribute to Rutgers' research on sea breezes and coastal storms, as well as future research initiatives conducted by RUCOOL and Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind.

Despite delayed initiation and reduced scope due to COVID-19 restrictions, NJAES researchers initiated 2020 hemp trials at Snyder Research Farm and RAREC. This is significant, as 2020 is the first year it is legal to produce hemp in New Jersey, enabling NJAES researchers to study a crop that has not been produced since World War II for cordage. Current focus of production nationally is for CBD, which is entirely different than previous production systems. States in the region have initiated production under the 2014 Farm Bill, hence, not losing 2020 production will enable NJAES to assist growers and develop NJ-specific production recommendations so growers become competitive in this emerging market. At Snyder Farm, a modified trial of eight CBD varieties planted on raised plastic mulched beds includes a pilot study looking at nitrogen content during flowering to assess bud quality and CBD content (in cooperation with U Maine researchers). At RAREC, five CBD-hemp cultivars are being grown in raised, plastic-mulched beds with drip irrigation with two irrigation treatments. In the greenhouse, two tissue-cultured CBD-hemp cultivars will be grown in recirculating NFT-hydroponic benches to monitor water and fertilizer use, with expected transplanting in late July. Qualitative analysis looking at several parameters of the field grown hemp will be conducted by our hemp analytical research team.