Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
September 2020

Farm-raised oysters at harvest.

As the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered restaurants across the U.S., shellfish farmers who rely on direct or wholesale sales to restaurants suffered economic impacts. The pandemic also led to a disruption in management of stock, as oysters originally bound for spring and summer harvests remained on the farm for longer than anticipated. Oysters are beneficial to the environment, serving as habitat for finfish as well as improving water quality. In New Jersey, funding from a special NOAA Sea Grant COVID-19 Rapid Response Aquaculture Funding Opportunity allows for the purchase of 76,000 of these oversized, farm-raised oysters directly from oyster farmers for the purpose of restoring habitats. The oysters will be transplanted from farms to targeted restoration sites in the Little Egg Harbor and Mullica River this month. The overgrown oysters will provide an ecological jumpstart that might otherwise take years to achieve using traditional oyster restoration practices. **Lisa Calvo**, aquaculture extension program coordinator at Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory leads this collaborative project, with Rutgers NJAES and New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium taking the lead.

A tick species associated with bats has been reported for the first time in New Jersey according to a Rutgers-led study reported in the *Journal of Medical Entomology*. This soft tick species is known to be in 29 of the 48 contiguous U.S. states, and was confirmed in New Jersey in the form of larvae collected from big brown bats in Mercer and Sussex counties. This is a new addition to the list of New Jersey ticks.

A grant proposal "Local Food, Direct Marketing, and Agritourism Activities as Value-Added Opportunities for Small Farmers in the Mid- Atlantic United States" has been funded by USDA for $98,488. Rutgers is partnering with NJDA, Penn State, Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, and other local stakeholders to expand value-added marketing opportunities for small farmers in the Mid-Atlantic. Professor **Ramu Govindasamy**, Department of Agriculture, Food, and Resource Economics is the principal investigator.

Albrecht M. Koppenhöfer, extension specialist in entomology was awarded a research grant of $49,865 for long-term suppression of turfgrass insect pests with native persistent entomopathogenic nematodes. His research is sponsored by the O.J. Noer Foundation through the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and US Golf Association.

Of Interest:
Considerations for Agritourism Operations During the Covid19 Pandemic. **Bamka, W.**, **Komar, S.**, **Melendez, M.**, **Infante-Casella, M.**, **Schilling, B.**, **VanVranken, R.** agritourism.rutgers.edu/training

A refereed journal article was published in the *Journal of Extension* about the "Ask the Ag Agent" webinar series which involved using available online tools to efficiently deliver Extension programming

and resources to agricultural producers and industry partners. These efforts may be informative for U.S. extension colleagues to enhance their remote correspondence. For New Jersey growers, the fall session of Ask the Ag Agent will be held every other Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. through October.

This year's Great Tomato Tasting at Home was the virtual version of the annual event held at Snyder Research and Extension Farm. The event included webinars with information and demonstrations led by county agents from the departments of Agricultural and Natural Resources and Family and Community Health Sciences. The event also included a virtual tour of the farm's research plots.

According to NJ state climatologist **Dave Robinson**, each month of summer 2020 in New Jersey ranked in the top 10 for warmth dating back to 1895, ranking this summer the second warmest on record overall, behind only 2010. The 10 warmest summers have all occurred since 1999, with seven of them occurring since 2010. Daytime heat was excessive but not record breaking, however the elevated nighttime warmth propelled the overall mean to second place, establishing a new record for the warmest average minimum on record.

The Vegetable and Small Fruit Program of the Climate Adaptation Fellowship is open to commercial farmers in the Northeast who grow vegetables and/or small fruit as well as to agricultural advisors who work with vegetable/small fruit farms in this region. This one-year program provides a peer-to-peer curriculum for farmers and advisors with a framework designed to integrate climate science with land manager knowledge. Farmers will improve their ability to make good planning decisions related to climate change adaptation. Extension specialist in pomology **Dan Ward**, Department of Plant Biology, is a member of the program team.

In the News:

NJ Monthly featured Atlantic County agricultural agent **Gary Pavlis** in the article, "The Man Who Helped Put Jersey Wineries on the Map."

Events:

September Nursery Twilight Meeting (credit-bearing online webinar), September 24, 2020, 6-7:00 p.m. Information and registration are available here.

Rutgers NJAES is a co-organizer of a two-day virtual event on Oct 14-15, 2020 to hear from leaders from New Jersey government, industry, academia, and the investment community who will discuss strategies and resources for accelerating innovation in New Jersey in the COVID economy. Speakers will provide the latest information on financial resources, government programs and strategies, inclusive innovation, academic innovation and entrepreneurial resources to keep the innovation ecosystem in New Jersey growing. To view the agenda and register go to: https://csitcovid19-opportunities.eventbrite.com.