

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
February 2022



NJ's state soil, Downer, augered from an Atlantic County blueberry field..

In the past 20-30 years, the concept of assessing overall soil quality has developed within the soil science community into the broader concept of “soil health.” Armed with abundant research and practitioner experience to support this area, NJAES has launched a Soil Health Initiative that is supported by [NJAES Vision 2025](#), with supplemental funding from the state. The goal is to promote soil health research, education, and outreach that will lead to the restoration of New Jersey’s soil resources and development of a sustainable system to protect them for future generations. Several activities are already underway, and three projects have been awarded seed funding to advance soil health initiatives. Find out more at [NJAES Launches Soil Health Initiative as Part of Vision 2025](#).

County agricultural agents **Stephen Komar** (Sussex and Rutgers SARE State Coordinator), **Michelle Infante-Casella** (Gloucester), and **Bill Bamka** (Burlington) received a \$40,000 USDA SARE Professional Development Program grant to develop the “[New Jersey Commercial Hemp Field Production Guide](#),” which was completed in December 2021. Contributors to the guide include program associate **Kate Brown** (Burlington) and student intern Matthew Lipka. In September, SARE officials visited the Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown, NJ, to view hemp variety research conducted by Komar and Bamka. A video produced during the visit covered the variety trials and how the field research was used to assist in developing the recommendations guide. The video and more information on the Rutgers Hemp program are available at sare.rutgers.edu/hemp.html.

The Charles E. & Lena Maier Vegetable Crops Research Award, administered by the Vegetable Growers’ Association of New Jersey, Inc., funds the following three proposals for 2022: “Growing Fresh Baby Ginger and Turmeric in New Jersey” (\$1,800), Principal Investigators (PIs): agricultural agents **Bill Erickson** (Monmouth) and **Bill Hlubik** (Middlesex); “Demonstrating Sensitivity of Economically Important Vegetables to Sub-Lethal Rates of Dicamba” (\$1,050), PIs: **Kate Brown**, **Bill Bamka**, and extension specialist in weed science **Thierry Besancon**; and “Evaluation of Acetochlor Efficacy and Safety in Cole Crops” (\$5,264), PI: **Thierry Besancon**, Collaborators: agricultural agent **Wes Kline** (Cumberland) and assistant professor in weed science Lynn Sosnoskie (Cornell).

Somerset County 4-H agent **Carol Ward** retired after 36 years of service to Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Ward served as the faculty liaison for the NJ 4-H Horse Project Advisory Committee. Read more about Ward’s career in the winter issue of Equine Science Center’s [The Equine Science Quarterly](#).

Rutgers professor of plant biology **Nick Vorsa** was named a 2022 recipient of the Service to Industry Award from the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA). WSCGA awards are given to individuals for their work on behalf of the WSCGA and the Wisconsin cranberry community. The award



was presented on January 19, during the 2022 Wisconsin Cranberry School and Conference. [Nick Vorsa Receives Service to Industry Award from Wisconsin Cranberry Growers : Newsroom \(rutgers.edu\)](#)

Of Interest

[Ask the Agent](#) is a new podcast offering insight on topics related to New Jersey agriculture, and is designed for both experienced and new farmers, and others interested in agriculture. The podcast is produced by **Bill Bamka**, program associate **Lisa Chiariello** (Sussex), and **Stephen Komar**. The first episode focuses on growing Hemp in New Jersey. To learn production, marketing, and regulatory information about growing hemp, tune in to hear advice and information from the Rutgers University Hemp Team. Contact asktheagent@njaes.rutgers.edu.

As the wine industry expands, so does the need for trained employees to work in vineyards and wineries. A Grape and Wine Science Certificate program is being developed by **Beverly Tepper**, professor of food science and program director. The training will impart basic education on viticulture and enology to the new workforce of vineyard/winery owners. In a survey, New Jersey's wine industry overwhelmingly (87%) supported the idea of a certificate program. The four-week intensive classroom program will be followed by paid internships at wineries and administered by the Rutgers Office of Continuing Education. The program will be launched in fall 2022.

NJAES faculty and staff released the newest commercial vegetable recommendations for growers, drawing from expertise across the region's land grant universities, USDA, and growers' knowledge and experience: [Mid-Atlantic Commercial Vegetable Production Recommendations, 2022/2023](#). **Wyenandt, A. van Vuuren, M.**, Owens, D., Johnson, C., **Hamilton, G.**, **Hastings, P.**, VanGessel, M.

The following new fact sheet is available on [NJAES Publications: FS1340: Non-structural Carbohydrates and Equine Warm-season Grass Pastures](#). **Weinert-Nelson, J.**, **Dolan, C.**, and **Williams, C.**

In the News

An article in *NJBIZ* on deer fencing referred to deer research conducted by NJAES, including a recent series of farmer case studies conducted by doctoral candidate and wildlife management staff member **Joe Paulin** and extension director **Brian Schilling**. [Bambi's blight - NJBIZ](#)

Events

The Center for Turfgrass Science will host the 31st Annual Rutgers Turfgrass Symposium on March 17, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the IFNH on Cook Campus in New Brunswick. This year's symposium will focus on modern approaches to research in turfgrass science. [Registration for the Symposium](#).

The 2022 Introductory Fisheries Science for Stakeholders (IFISSH) course, offered by Rutgers Cooperative Extension, will be meeting weekly via Zoom on Tuesdays, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m., February through April 5. Information about the course and registration are available at [Introductory Fisheries Science for Stakeholders - RCE of Ocean County \(rutgers.edu\)](#).

