



February 2023

Launch of Offshore Wind Energy Collaborative and Symposium



Margaret Brennan-Tonetta at the Rutgers Offshore Wind Energy Symposium.

NJAES Senior Associate Director **Margaret Brennan-Tonetta**, director of the Office of Resource and Economic Development, launched the [Rutgers Offshore Wind Energy Collaborative](#), along with co-founders **Josh Kohut** (Marine and Coastal Sciences) and **Wade Trappe** (School of Engineering). Their goal is to build expertise in offshore wind energy across the university and to encourage knowledge-sharing needed to foster the growth of a wind-based economy in New Jersey. The collaborative, which secured a two-year, \$125,000 grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), hosted the first [Rutgers Offshore Wind Energy Symposium](#) on Jan. 12. The symposium brought together more than 140 attendees from academia, industry, government, and the nonprofit sectors to

discuss challenges and opportunities, as well as build community engagement in offshore wind energy. A summary report based on information gathered from the symposium will be prepared and used to inform Rutgers research, teaching, and outreach and by NJEDA to develop recommendations that catalyze the offshore wind energy sector. The NJEDA also provided a \$282,000 grant to Rutgers to create the [New Jersey Wind Institute Fellowship Program](#) to support student research in topics that further the growth of the offshore wind energy sector in New Jersey.

Produce Safety Handbook for Buyers Offers Increased Access to Growers

Wesley Kline, agricultural agent, RCE of Cumberland County, was a facilitator at the Northeast Center for Advanced Food Safety (NECAFS) meeting in Hartford, CT, January 17-19. NECAFS was awarded a grant from the Food Safety Outreach Program at USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture to develop the Produce Safety Handbook for Buyers, an online wholesale buyers guide produced by the University of Vermont and Rutgers. The handbook summarizes the produce food safety landscape in the northeastern U.S. in an effort to improve access for buyers to connect with growers who meet minimum food safety standards. Buyers will better understand and navigate the produce safety audit procedures and inspection information of each state. The website also provides farm production statistics, state inspection, and audit information in simple charts and tables, all with the goal of improving produce safety knowledge, communication, and alignment among buyers and producers.

Training for Directors of County Boards of Agriculture

Agricultural agents with Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) help to provide education and technical assistance for agricultural leadership organizations throughout New Jersey, regionally and nationally. On January 3, **Michelle Infante-Casella**, agricultural agent and county extension department head, RCE

of Gloucester County, worked with New Jersey Farm Bureau (NJFB) to train directors of County Boards of Agriculture on the duties and responsibilities of being a director on a board. NJFB Director Peter Furey and NJFB President Allen Carter hosted the event that drew 42 participants. Information covered in the presentation by Infante-Casella is outlined in NJAES fact sheet, "[FS1250: Guidance for Directors and Leaders of Agricultural Organizations in New Jersey](#)," which is co-authored by Brian Schilling, director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension. The recording of the training session is archived on the NJFB YouTube channel at [\(640\) NJFB County Board of Agriculture Training - January 3, 2023 - YouTube](#).

Of Interest

Members of the **Rutgers On-farm Food Safety Team** participated in the 2022 National Produce Safety Consortium meeting held in Phoenix, Arizona, December 14-16. This is an annual meeting where the Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), state inspectors, and Extension personnel involved in on-farm food safety meet to review projects and exchange ideas for the following year. **Meredith Melendez** represented the team this year and led a workshop on differentiating between a hazard and a risk in a produce operation. **Wesley Kline** and Melendez serve on the On-Farm Readiness Review development team for NASDA. The team developed a national curriculum to train state inspectors and Extension personnel on how to carry out farm reviews related to the Food Safety Modernization Produce Safety Rule.

In the News

A timeline of the Jersey tomato, noting NJAES' release of the **Rutgers tomato** in 1934 and its 2016 release of the **Rutgers 250**, an improved version of the 1934 original.

[New Jersey Monthly: How the beloved Jersey tomato came to be.](#)

U.S. Department of Energy is scaling up the emerging field of "agrivoltaics" and seeking innovations in both solar technology and farming techniques that can produce clean energy and food at the same time, on the same plot of land. **Ethan Schoolman**, assistant professor in the Department of Human Ecology, discusses the Rutgers-led research and demonstration project that involves agrivoltaic installations at three NJAES farms.

[Bloomberg Law: U.S. seeks perfect "Reese's Cup" mix of farming and solar panels.](#)

Events

Online Gardening Education Series is available to home gardeners from February 9 to May 25. [The 16-week session](#) will cover topics like botany, soils, entomology, IPM, plant pathology, trees and shrubs, pruning, turf, weeds, vegetable production, small fruit, tree fruit, composting, and herbaceous plants. The series is hosted by multiple RCE offices and sessions will be taught by Rutgers faculty and staff in the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources and other units.

Food Safety Training for Blueberry Growers on March 15 at the Rutgers Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research, 125a Lake Oswego, Chatsworth, NJ. Deadline to [register is March 8](#). For more information, contact Brandi at (856) 451-2800 x 1 or brandiwi@co.cumberland.nj.us.

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