Our Vision

Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) Cooperative Extension helps the diverse population of New Jersey adapt to a rapidly changing society and improve their lives and communities through an educational process that uses science-based knowledge. Through science-based educational programs, Rutgers Cooperative Extension truly enhances the quality of life for residents of New Jersey and brings the wealth of knowledge of the state university to local communities.

Our Goals

- Ensure healthy lifestyles
- Provide productive futures for youth, adults, and communities
- Enhance and protect environmental resources
- Ensure economic growth and agricultural sustainability
- Improve food safety and nutrition

Program Thrust Areas Include:

- Economic Growth and Agricultural Sustainability
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Human and Community Development
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Food Safety and Nutrition

What We Invest

Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) is funded through the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the federal/state partnership of USDA/New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. This funding is complimented by a multitude of extramural grants secured by Extension faculty and staff.

In 2007, RCE of Gloucester County’s four faculty, 8 staff and hundreds of volunteers actively engaged in the delivery of Extension programming that reaches thousands of residents throughout Gloucester County. We are pleased to present the highlights of this year’s achievements in our 2008 Annual Report.
Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS)

Family and Community Health Sciences combines research and practical advice to help Gloucester County residents stay healthy, enjoy life, be active, and reduce health care costs. We offer a variety of initiatives, workshops, publications, and online learning opportunities to help individuals and families make choices that improve health. Research shows that many of our chronic diseases—obesity, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and some cancers—could be prevented through healthful eating and regular physical activity.

Get Moving-Get Healthy New Jersey, Rutgers Cooperative Extension’s flagship wellness initiative, is a partnership between FCHS, 4-H, and a variety of state and local governments, research institutions, professional groups, corporations, and private organizations.

The mission of Get Moving-Get Healthy New Jersey is to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities. Get Moving-Get Healthy New Jersey encourages a healthy lifestyle, especially healthy eating and physical activity, through educational programs, a website, publications, and targeted marketing campaigns. FCHS outreach in Gloucester County supports this initiative with a number of educational and research projects, including:

From Our Farms

From Our Farms is an educational program that promotes improved nutrition and consumption of locally grown foods (which will, in turn, sustain the economic viability of local farms) through a series of family-based activities offered through local libraries, childcare facilities, and preschools.

From Our Farms uses exploration and adventure to teach children about food, nutrition, and the farm. The curriculum uses hands-on activities and family literacy projects to reach children. The activities featured in this curriculum also help prepare children for school by emphasizing math, reading, writing, and cognitive development.

This year, as a result of From Our Farms instruction, 1012 families learned how to eat more nutritiously by increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, which is linked to decreases in incidence of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and some cancers. Surveys report that families who participate in From Our Farms programs demonstrate the following behavior changes:

- 75% report that their child tried a new fruit or vegetable
- 34% prepared/cooked locally grown foods with their children
- 75% learned how fruits/vegetables grow
- 83% learned which fruits/vegetables grow in New Jersey
- 99% purchased “Jersey Fresh” produce
- 97% visited a farm stand or farm market

Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP)

FSNEP brings food and nutrition education to Gloucester County’s limited resource population. This is a federally grant-funded program that facilitates collaboration between Rutgers Cooperative Extension and local organizations, schools, and programs. Approved curricula that are based on the United States Department of Agriculture’s MyPyramid and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans are presented in group settings to help improve behaviors associated with nutrition, food security, and physical activity. All lessons are behaviorally focused and learner-driven, which encourages participation, discussion, and interaction.

Adult classes were conducted in the Eleanor Corbett House in Franklin Township and the T.I.P.S. program at Mother
and Child Development Center in Glassboro. As a result of 8-10 different lessons, 64% of participants showed improvement in food resource management practices, 92% in nutrition practices, and 67% in food safety practices.

This year, FSNEP grew to include five schools in Paulsboro and Woodbury, up from two the year before. FSNEP educators conducted an 8-week series of lessons to over 1200 students in five Paulsboro and Woodbury elementary schools, in addition to students in the NJ After 3 program in Paulsboro.

**BEE Healthy! Eat Smart and Exercise!**

A collaboration with New Jersey Action For Healthy Kids, FSNEP, and the Paulsboro School District, BEE Healthy! brings fun, learning, and excitement into school wellness. BEE Healthy! strives to improve nutrition and physical activity of youth in grades pre-K through 6 and their families—in the cafeteria, in the classroom, in the community, and at home.

This initiative involved school- and community-wide collaboration with 750+ students and families in Paulsboro to create a healthier school and healthier kids. BEE Healthy! combines classroom and community food and nutrition education projects with school-wide activities, cafeteria promotions, and menu enhancements.

The project has five key goals:

- Help schools introduce a greater variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy foods on the school lunch menu
- Offer food and nutrition education projects to students, staff, families, and the community
- Promote nutrition and physical activity by offering inter-related promotional, marketing, and educational initiatives throughout the school
- Support school wellness initiatives and help families better understand the potential health and educational benefits that good nutrition and physical activity bring to their children
- Increase the use of locally grown produce and introduce a “farm to cafeteria” initiative, which offers economic benefits to Gloucester County farmers
Agriculture and Resource Management

This program area works closely with commercial farms and allied industries in Gloucester County on issues related to crop production, agricultural product marketing, and interpreting regulations for this important industry.

Two agricultural agents are employed to provide extension education, applied research, and service to the agricultural industry. A master gardener and home horticulture program associate is funded by the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders and provides additional outreach to consumers and civic organizations throughout the county.

Peach Activities

The testing and evaluation of peach and plum varieties continued in 2008. Four new yellow fleshed peaches NJ 350, 351, 352, and 353; white fleshed nectarine NJ 100; and four flat peaches with white and yellow flesh NJ F15, NJ F16, NJ F17, and NJF18, were finalized. Advanced selections NJ G48-133 peach and NJ D90-4 have been selected for introduction.

Through publication in the Plant Pest Advisory Fruit Newsletter, New Jersey Horticultural News, one variety research meeting, an exhibit of varieties at the New Jersey Peach Festival, and a fruit variety showcase resulted in growers planting and ordering approximately 15,000 trees for 2008. Other promising varieties that were selected for commercial planting were Ruby Prince, Flamin Fury PF 28-007, and Autumn Star. Research has also developed a way to measure fruit quality without damaging fruit, reducing fruit drop with chemicals in late season, and the improvement of fruit quality with cable girdling.

A Peach Marketing Summit II brought together 65 shippers and buyers agreeing to focus on local marketing and improved food safety. A peach buyer’s guide was written and 1200 copies were published and distributed to buyers and retailers. The guide also raised $17,000 for peach promotion. Information was written and provided to 24 editors, reporters, and food writers attending Peach Media Day who published articles or did radio and TV reports on peach utilization. Interviews by the media were given on peach related stories. The peach educational exhibits and the peach pak competition were coordinated for the 4-H Fair and New Jersey Peach Festival, which attracted approximately 32,000 visitors. Wholesale peach prices increased by approximately 12 cents per pound in 2007. These wholesale prices coupled with good demand and movement occurred in spite of heavy volume from competitors in California, who flooded the US markets with high quality fruit.

The Guide to Gloucester County Farm Products was updated and printed for distribution with the Department of Business and Economic Development. Funding was procured and 4,800 copies printed and distributed at 14 marketing and promotional events. Agents are working with BED department on developing more agritourism and new ways to promote GC farms and products. We assisted two new agri-tourism enterprises on local farms in Woolwich and Harrison Townships to expand retail sales.

Soil Fertility Recommendations

Approximately 440 soil samples were analyzed at the Rutgers NJAES Soil Testing Laboratory. Faculty and staff in Gloucester County provided written recommendations on these tests, which resulted in proper application of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizers on farm fields, athletic fields, recreational areas, home lawns, and landscapes throughout Gloucester County. Ultimately, these recommendations prevent over-fertilization and reduce environmental impacts of nitrates and phosphates.
Marketing Agricultural Products

In collaboration with FCHS and Gloucester County Office of Economic Development, the fourth edition of The From Our Farms Guide to Gloucester County Farm Products was issued. 10,000 copies of this award-winning publication were distributed throughout the county and South Jersey to promote agri-tourism and economic development. This agri-tourism tool is also posted on the RCE of Gloucester County and Office of Economic Development websites.

Major impacts were made in increased peach prices in 2007 through our peach marketing program. A peach marketing seminar was held in December for 28 shippers and a Peach Packing workshop panel for 74 growers in February.

The peach educational exhibits and the peach pack competition were coordinated for the New Jersey Peach Festival. Over nine major newspaper articles and additional radio and TV spots across New Jersey and Philadelphia resulted from these efforts. A peach buyers guide was written and printed for 1500 buyers. Information from the guide was used for development of the www.jerseypeaches.com website.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

The Rutgers NJAES Fruit IPM program continues to provide field scouting and pesticide recommendations. Over 1800 tree fruit acres were enrolled in the program in Southern New Jersey counties in 2007 statewide. The IPM program works with 15 tree fruit growers in Gloucester County. In addition, the IPM program helps growers with commercial application of insect mating disruption on 387 acres in Gloucester County. This represented 30% of the peach and apple acreage in Gloucester County. RCE specialists demonstrated “Reduced Risk” insect pest management practices on 45 acres of tree fruit. This program employs mating disruption and “Reduced Risk” insecticides to control key apple and peach pests, lowering pesticide usage and costs.

Wine Grapes

Wine grape educational information was delivered at three workshops, conferences, and twilight meetings to 117 growers. Additional information was delivered via newsletters and on the Rutgers NJAES website. Twenty one wine grape growers and wineries are now in operation, with 13 in the American Viticultural Area for New Jersey Outer Coastal Plain soils part of the area wine grape growing region.
Vegetable Crops

Vegetable crops research in 2007 included two zucchini and yellow summer squash trials that resulted in major changes to 2008 variety recommendations for commercial farmers. The study focused on varieties with disease resistance to lessen the impact of annual crop loss. Outcomes of the study emphasized choosing newly recommended varieties that will be more productive and increases farm income. Gloucester County continues to be a leading production area for squash and all cucurbits.

A research, outreach, and education program titled, “Rediscovering the Jersey Tomato” began in 2007 with objectives that include evaluation of past and new tomato varieties to create a grouping of recommended tomato varieties that have good yields, but more importantly high quality and exceptional flavor. The goal is to once again bring notoriety to the Jersey Tomato based on quality and flavor standards. To start off, two tomato variety trials were conducted to evaluate 31 varieties of tomatoes for commercial production, and the study is being conducted again in 2008. The study also included taste evaluations at public events to rate consumer preferences. Another part of this project was to reintroduce the 'Ramapo' tomato. For years consumers have requested seed for this variety that was taken off the market years ago. The demand was so strong that the Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Vegetable Working Group took on the task of contracting seed production, packaging, re-release, and distribution of this highly sought-after variety.

Water Allocation

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Water Allocations Program has been one of the most demanding legislated programs for agriculture agents. More and more information about agricultural water use is being demanded from DEP and regulations are about to change for the coming year that will require additional information.

Master Gardeners

Gloucester County’s master gardeners were busy working on a variety of projects this year. One very successful project was the initiation of a Junior Master Gardener program for home-schooled youth. Over 35 youth attended each of two 8-week sessions, where they learned about soils and water and plant functions. Students also completed a community service project by revamping the landscape bed at the AM-VETS building in Sewell in time for their Armed Forces Day celebration.

Master gardeners continued to work on a variety of community beautification projects throughout Gloucester County, including the Gloucester County Veterans’ Cemetery, Ann Whithall House, Glassboro Library and Glass Museum, and offered horticultural therapy classes to the residents of Shady Lane Nursing Home. Master gardeners also offered a variety of evening and weekends programs including answering garden questions at the Woodbury Community Garden.
**4H Youth Development**

The 4-H Youth Development Program uses a “learning-by-doing” approach in providing non-formal, educational experiences to young people in 1st grade through one year out of high school. This target audience learns leadership, citizenship, and life skills under the guidance of caring adults. The 4-H club is the foundation of the program, but children are reached through several educational delivery modes.

In 2008, over 2,000 Gloucester County youth were reached via 4-H clubs, special interest and short-term programs, school enrichment, and day camps. We have 55 4-H clubs, which meet throughout the county from Franklinville to Logan Township. Presently, 102 volunteer leaders provide support and guidance to these 4-H clubs and assist with events and programs. The average volunteer leader donates over 30 hours at the Gloucester County Fair and another 200 hours between club meetings and activities. In 2008, leaders volunteered over 22,000 hours of service to RCE. During the 2007 Gloucester County 4-H Award Recognition event, 88 volunteers were recognized for a total 518 of years of service to 4-H.

Community service and service learning instills in our 4-H youth the beginning of civic engagement and responding to the needs of others and the community. Each 4-H club is required to participate in at least one community service project. Gloucester County 4-H Senior Council, comprised of 29 teen members, completed several projects, including: Operation Military Kids Leadership weekend, put together and ran the haunted house at the 4-H Fall Festival, and held a yard sale to support Adoptions from the Heart.

**Community Outreach**

Our annual Gloucester County 4-H Fair and NJ State Peach Festival welcomed more than 30,000 visitors during July 2007. Fair goers learned about the achievements of our program through exhibits and events while interacting with 4-Hers, their families, and volunteers.

**Healthy Living**

4-H and FCHS in Gloucester County were actively engaged with Get Moving-Get Healthy this year. Several 4-H clubs, classrooms in three Gloucester County schools, and three libraries hosted this important educational program for their children since January 2008. All 4-H clubs are encouraged to offer nutritious snacks and exercise during their meeting time.

**School Enrichment**

Throughout Gloucester County, one or more of six different lessons were provided in 12 schools and five libraries, reaching more than 1,000 children. The most requested lesson, Colonial Food and Fiber, teaches children about textiles, farming, homesteading, and the way of life in Gloucester County back in the 1700’s. This lesson was also taped for a lived broadcast on Washington Township Access TV. Our newest program, Spiderific!, is gaining popularity as children learn how spiders move, all about their webs, and the benefits of spiders in our environment.
Science, Engineering, and Technology

Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) is one of the primary initiatives in 4-H. Animal Science is one of the most popular project areas across the county. Over 320 youth are enrolled in horse or equine; 66 in rabbits and small animal; 81 in one or more area of livestock, including goat, sheep, hog, dairy cow, and beef; 26 in dog; 13 in herpetology; and 15 in exotic birds. In addition, 15 youth are enrolled in the engineering club and 22 in cooking, sewing, and crafts. All members must keep project record books and complete summary forms yearly. The staff and volunteers reach out regularly to the members and families via email and county website.

Leadership Opportunities

Club presidents and other officers help guide their 4-H clubs with the assistance and support of the 4-H leaders. Teens attend conferences, leadership weekends, and camping to build their leadership skills. The 2007 Gloucester County Teen Ambassador escorted Governor Jon Corzine at the Gloucester County 4-H Fair.

Seeds to Success Youth Farmstand Project

Seeds to Success reaches out to three distinct target audiences with a variety of different benefits:

- Youth – Seeds to Success prepared 26 at-risk, special needs youth for the workforce and life through classroom and on-the-job training. During the school year, youth participate in nutrition, food safety, money management, and banking education. During the summer, students work at youth farmstands.

- Farmers – Farmstands purchased $10,240 worth of produce from six local growers.

- The Community – Three limited resource communities benefit by gaining access to locally grown, nutritious produce. Low-income residents and seniors can purchase this produce with their WIC and senior farmstand vouchers, which accounts for 11% of summer farmstand sales. This year, Seeds to Success became the first NJ youth farmstand to qualify as an authorized food stamp vendor; customers were able to purchase produce with foodstamps!

As part of this project, 245 youth from four schools participated in Jersey Fit food and nutrition education during the school year. As a result, students were better able to identify the healthier foods by comparing food labels; identify locally grown fruits and vegetables; practice safe food handling techniques; and apply USDA recommendations to use color as a guide to increase variety in the diet by identifying the types of fruits and vegetables that were better sources of key nutrients.

Cooperating Agencies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.