

CHAPTER VI: AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Consistency with NJ Department of Agriculture Economic Development Strategies

The State of New Jersey offers farmers a number of support services and programs ranging from technical advice to farm loans. One of these services is the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) Smart Growth Toolkit, which provides information to support municipal governments, businesses, non-profit groups, and local citizens in their efforts to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the 2006 NJDA Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey. The Tool Kit embraces the five components that have been identified by the NJDA as critical for the future of farming: Farmland Preservation, Agricultural Land Use Planning, Economic Development, Natural Resource Conservation, and Agricultural Industry Sustainability.

As part of this emphasis on the business of agriculture, NJDA issued its 2011 Economic Development Strategies, which identify and propose methods to expand and enhance various subsets of the agricultural industry in New Jersey, including produce, horticulture, dairy, livestock and poultry, field crops, organic, equine, wine, and agritourism. The NJDA observes that "local access to large affluent markets has long been an advantage for the marketing of products. While our markets are still there, competition has become tougher, New Jersey's produce industry must continually work to rediscover its competitive advantages, improving access to nearby markets and strengthening consumer loyalty."

Field Crops Production

Forage land, which includes all types of hay and haylage, grass silage, and greenchop, has historically been a key crop for Morris County with an average of 128 farms producing some form of the crop since 1987. According to the 2017 U.S. Agricultural Census, roughly 60 percent of the County's field crop acreage (3,001 acres across 142 farms) remains devoted to forage land, with a market value of nearly \$1 million. Vegetables for sale account for a small but growing portion of the County's agriculture land base, with an average of 74 farms producing some type of vegetable for sale since 1987. The crop has experienced a 10 percent increase in number of farms over the last 30 years, to 88 farms producing the crop with a 2017 market value of \$4.8 million.

The following economic strategies from the New Jersey State Agricultural Convention can be implemented and encouraged regarding field crops in Morris County:

- Ensure plant health by the implementation of the Mexican Bean Beetle parasite program, soybean use monitoring surveys, and the release of beneficial insects to control the tarnished plant bug and Mile A Minute weed, in addition working with the National Resource Conservation Service and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension;
- Support organic field crop production to increase value of the crops and linking growers with organic food processors, retailers, animal feed suppliers, and all other handlers;
- Explore opportunities to diversify farm income to other seasonal products and educate growers about agritourism;
- Support plans for green energy initiative such as bio-fuel plants and related bio-fuel businesses, which could elevate the price of regionally produced grain or other agricultural products;
- Investigate market opportunities for edamame, a variety of vegetable soybean gaining popularity among people from all backgrounds which does not require processing for human consumption, can be consumed fresh or frozen, and is high in protein while being low in cholesterol and fat; and
- Assist in addressing labor issues through the provision of housing and training opportunities at the county and local level and taking a proactive approach to worker safety.

Nursery and Greenhouse Crops Production

Nurseries, greenhouses, floriculture and sod are important agricultural commodities in Morris County. This agricultural sector accounted for total sales of \$13.8 million in 2017. One likely reason this sector of the crop industry

has become so important is due to the continued nonagricultural population growth in the County and region, providing a ready market for these products. The County can continue to strengthen and expand this sector of the agriculture economy as opportunities arise. Morris County can implement the following economic strategies from the New Jersey State Agricultural Convention with regard to nursery and greenhouse crops:

- Ensure plant health by continuing inspections for harmful pests and disease and seek ways to increase use of new methods of pest control, inspecting and certifying disease-free nurseries and conducting seed certification to ensure high quality turf grass seed for sod growers;
- Increase consumer awareness by encouraging increased participation in the *Jersey Fresh* program and aggressively marketing Jersey grown horticultural products; and,
- Support the research of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in identifying new varieties of pest- and disease-resistant crops and developing new methods of pest control.

In addition, Morris County farmers may also consider growing native plants for direct purchase, since New Jersey farmers are ideally positioned to cultivate New Jersey native plants. The State recently established the “New Jersey Native Plants Program”, which creates a similar labeling system and marketing campaign as the *Jersey Fresh* and *Jersey Grown* brands. Nursery growers in Morris County are encouraged to participate in this program.

Livestock & Poultry Production

Livestock and poultry operations include beef and dairy cattle and calves, sheep & lambs, hogs & pigs, and poultry. Due to high input costs, many farmers in the State have opted not to engage exclusively in dairy farming, but rather are sectoring their farms into various agriculture products, such as other livestock. If input costs continue to increase, it is possible the dairy industry may continue to decline, but the County’s farmers should see this as an opportunity to diversify to other agricultural products such as non-dairy cattle, calves, poultry, hogs, pigs, and other animals. According to the US Agricultural Census, livestock, poultry, and their products made up \$1.7 million in sales for the County in 2017.

According to the U.S. Agricultural Census, an average of 65 farms have produced chickens for eggs (also referred to as “layers”) since 1987. As of 2017, 89 farms currently produce layers, representing a 33 percent increase from 59 farms in 1987. Morris County has earned \$395,000 from the production of chickens for eggs. Although cattle and calves have been another consistent earner for the County with an average of 50 farms over the last 30 years, the number of farms producing cattle and calves has dropped roughly 90 percent in that same time period. According to the 2017 US Agricultural Census, Morris County earned \$105,000 from the production of cattle and calves.

The County has seen its role in the above livestock categories fluctuate over the years. Yet, with the County’s focus on general harvested crops such as hay, vegetables, and corn, it is important to engage in economic development efforts that increase potential markets for the County’s livestock and poultry production. The County can employ the following techniques from the economic strategies from the New Jersey State Agricultural Convention’s proposed economic development strategies:

- Ensure animal health through the implementation of best management practices;
- Identify whether goat products are a viable market for Morris County farmers as demand for their products is rising and Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grants are available to study the economics of breeding and marketing meat goats; and,
- Encourage the production of grass-fed animals such as beef, sheep and meat goats.

The County can employ the following additional strategies to help boost the crop and livestock sectors:

- Working with markets by supporting the sale and marketing of locally produced meat and eggs;
- Aggressively marketing value-added dairy products;
- Exploring various additional products and markets, including local restaurants and grocery markets;
- Working to attract livestock veterinarians to the area, a strategy which can include economic incentives;
- Bringing in slaughterhouses and USDA inspectors to increase competitiveness;

- Promoting the agritourism portion of livestock and poultry, such as petting zoos; and
- Assisting farmers with farming techniques, regulatory requirements and the latest research for livestock and poultry. This would include continued and additional cooperation with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Morris County, NJDA and NRCS.

Agritourism

Agritourism is significant to the long-term sustainability of Morris County's agricultural industry. According to the 2011 Agriculture Economic Development Strategies, "many residents consider agriculture a novelty and something to be explored and enjoyed." Agritourism has a unique potential to attract visitors from other counties and even from neighboring states. Seasonal farm stands, petting zoos, hayrides, pick-your-own farms, and seasonal events in the County help to attract visitors. The following are a few techniques discussed by the 2011 NJ State Agricultural Convention Economic Development study:

- Expand roadside programs by working with the NJ Department of Transportation to expand Tourist Oriented Designated Signs and coordinate efforts to gain approval for a discounted agritourism rate.
- Consumer promotion by distributing inexpensive agritourism brochures with industry websites and contact information to help promote seasonal events and direct farm marketing opportunities in addition to expanding the promotion of the visitnjfarms.org website.

There are many agencies, boards, and existing programs offered through Morris County and the State which could provide assistance to help farmers advertise their businesses, services, and events.

- Jersey Fresh
 - The County may want to consider working with Jersey Fresh to create a Morris County Administrator account to manage/upload Morris County farms for easy access to the public.
- Morris County Bureau of Tourism
 - Works with the chamber of commerce to promote tourism throughout the County and incorporate agricultural offerings (CSAs, farm stands, farmers markets, etc.) and agritourism events.
- Taste of Morris County
 - Morris County farmers have an opportunity to become involved with this program.
- Visitnjfarms.com
 - Offers farmers a log-in to advertise their farm and activities. The site is sponsored by Rutgers University, New Jersey Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, and the New Jersey Farm Bureau. The website features an interactive map, as well as information pertaining to what is in season, events, and news.
- Farm Bureau
 - Farmers fill out a form about their farm, and what is grown. The Farm Bureau maintains an inventory of farms by each county, including the location, hours of operation, specialties, value-added products, as well as other products.
- New Jersey Farmers' Direct Marketing Association
- County Chamber of Commerce

Outreach and education to farmers in the County may be needed to let them know of the existing services and websites that can be used to advertise their businesses.

The Board recommends that Morris County should work with these existing agencies, rather than creating their own "brand." Board members expressed concern over diluting the Jersey Fresh brand to create a County-led initiative. Morris County Bureau of Tourism and other existing programs, including Jersey Fresh and other initiatives offered by agencies should be encouraged to be used by existing farms and farmers. The County should incorporate agritourism events into their existing Bureau of Tourism. The Board could also do outreach to existing farmers to help them navigate Jersey Fresh and other websites to help get their information available to the public.

American Farmland Trust Farms Under Threat: The State of the States

On May 13, 2020, the American Farmland Trust (AFT) published *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States*, a report analyzing the impacts of agricultural land conversion. The Report indicates that from 2001 to 2016 alone, 11 million acres of farmland or ranchland were converted to land uses of higher intensity. The Report also creates an Agricultural Land Protection Scorecard, and assesses six policy tools commonly used to protect farmland, support agricultural viability, and provide access to land. The scorecard ranks all of the states in terms of the following key policies:

1. Purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE);
2. Land use planning policies;
3. Property tax relief;
4. Agricultural district programs;
5. Farm link / Land Link; and,
6. State leasing.

The State of New Jersey ranks #1 in terms of raw (345) and weighted score (59). New Jersey ranked 79 for PACE, 47 for planning, 40 for property tax relief, 63 for agricultural district programs, 54 for Farm Link, and 63 for State Leasing.

Rural Microenterprise Activity on Preserved Farmland

The SADC recently adopted amendments allowing owners of qualified farmland to apply for special permits for “rural microenterprise” operations, within certain parameters. Rural microenterprises are certain types of appropriately scaled businesses or activities that are compatible with the agricultural use of the farm. The Act also promotes and incentivizes the preservation of historic and culturally significant agricultural structures (N.J.A.C. 2:76-22.1 through 22.12 and 22.14, and new rules at N.J.A.C. 2:76-22.12 and 22A).

Winery Special Occasion Events on Preserved Farmland

In July 2014, P.L.2014, Ch 16, “the Winery Special Occasions Event Law,” was enacted to allow special occasion events to be held at wineries located on preserved farms under certain circumstances for a 44-month pilot program. The Legislature authorized expanding the program for two additional years, which expired on May 30, 2020. The rules established the standards for verifying compliance with the legislation's income limit, including audit procedures.

In March of 2020, the SADC released the final report with recommendations pertaining to the winery pilot program. A key finding of the report was that the SADC recommended the enactment of legislation that would allow certain farm based “events” that are not currently permitted on preserved farms, to be conducted by owners of all preserved commercial farms, and that reasonable standards be applied to their size, frequency and impact to the farm’s resources. The provisions should further acknowledge the need to protect the public investment in farmland preservation and ensure that the land remains primarily dedicated to agricultural production activities.

For more information regarding the March 2020 SADC Final Report for the Pilot Program for Winery Special Occasion Events, visit:

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/news/populartopics/SOE%20FINAL%20REPORT%20TO%20THE%20GOVERNOR%20AND%20LEGISLATURE%202020.03.05.pdf>

Solar on Farms- Grid Supply Bill (S2605 and A4554) and Dual Use Bill (S3484 and A5434)

In July of 2021, two separate solar bills were passed by the State Legislature and signed into law. The Grid Supply Bill (S2605 and A4554)⁸⁷ aims to permit utility-scale solar projects that are eligible for renewable energy incentive certificates (SREC-IIs) on farmland. Standards are included to protect prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance, while also establishing limitations on the area of utility-scale projects that can be in within a County and

⁸⁷ Assembly Bill A4554 adopted as Public Law P.L.2021, c.169.

its corresponding ADA. However, these projects are prohibited on preserved farmland and are not eligible for farmland assessment purposes.

The Dual Use Bill (S3484 and A5434)⁸⁸ establishes a 3-5 year pilot program which will test the viability of the dual use concept. Projects will be capped at 10 MW (estimated to be 50-100 acres) in size and the overall pilot program is capped at 200 MW (1,000-2,000 acres). The law permits owners of unpreserved, farm assessed land to install and operate a dual-use solar energy project (as defined in the bill) and continue to receive farmland assessment. The land is required to be actively devoted to agricultural and horticultural use. The loss of prime soils and statewide importance soils in ADAs are prohibited. Under the law, dual use projects approved through the pilot program are defined as a “permitted use” within a municipality.

Agricultural Management Practice for On-Farm Direct Marketing Facilities, Activities and Events; and Revised Right-to-Farm Procedural Rules

On January 31, 2014 the SADC adopted the agricultural management practice (AMP) for On-Farm Direct Marketing Facilities, Activities and Events (N.J.A.C. 2:76-2A.13). The AMP is a set of new rules which establishes performance-based standards for commercial farms seeking to qualify for Right-to-Farm protection for on-farm direct marketing facilities, activities and events that are used to facilitate and provide for direct farmer-to-consumer sales, such as farm stands, farm stores, community-supported agriculture (CSA) and pick-your-own operations, and associated activities and events. The intent of the AMP is to provide statewide standards on which farmers, municipalities, CADBs and the public can rely, while also providing flexibility to commercial farm owners and operators.

The Committee also adopted a revision to the Right-to-Farm procedural rules which is intended to streamline the process (N.J.A.C. 2:76-2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10). The rule proposal includes procedural changes to the site-specific agricultural management practice (SSAMP) process and the Right-to-Farm complaint process. The proposed amendments also clarify the roles of CADBs and the SADC in the Right-to-Farm review process in a manner consistent with the Right-to-Farm Act.

SADC Agricultural Management Practices

Over the last decade, the SADC has developed agricultural management practices (AMPs) for a variety of farming activities. In order for a farm to be eligible for the protections of the Right-to-Farm Act, the commercial farm must be in compliance with the AMPs or with generally accepted agricultural practices. Twelve AMPs have been promulgated by the SADC, which covers the following topics:

1. Apiary
2. Poultry Manure
3. Food processing by-product land application
4. Commercial vegetable production
5. Commercial tree fruit production
6. Natural resource conservation
7. On-farm compost operations operating on commercial farms
8. Fencing installation for wildlife control
9. Equine activities on commercial farms
10. Aquaculture
11. Construction, installation, operation, or maintenance of solar energy facilities, structures and equipment on commercial farms
12. On-farm direct marketing facilities, activities, and events

⁸⁸ Assembly Bill A5434 adopted as Public Law P.L.2021, c.170

Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion and Recruitment Strategies

Institutional Stakeholders

The New Jersey State Board of Agriculture is an eight-member body established by the New Jersey Legislature to set the broad agricultural policies of the Department of Agriculture. The State Board operates in accordance with the agricultural laws of New Jersey to promote the agricultural interests of the State and to protect and serve the citizens of New Jersey by providing information and unbiased enforcement of laws and regulations ensuring quality products and services. Products and services such as seed, feed, fertilizer, conservation of soil and water resources; control, suppression, and eradication of livestock and poultry diseases and plant pests; and many others are regulated by the State Board, as well as, feeding schoolchildren and the distribution of surplus federal foods to soup kitchens and pantries that serve our needy citizens.

The North Eastern Organic Farming Association- New Jersey, (NOFA-NJ) is an association supporting organic growers to promote healthy farms, healthy food, and healthy land. NOFA-NJ also caters to beginner farmers interested in growing organically, offering information about organic certification, events, and NOFA programs.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers assistance to farmers through the delivery of agricultural programs, such as Farm and Farm Loan Programs.

Farm Credit East (FCE) offers farmers a variety of financial and lender services. Farm Credit East offers beginner farmers with additional technical assistance and resources needed to improve financial profitability by hosting online webinar sessions throughout the year.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit membership organization that represents agricultural producers and enterprises. This organization focuses on advocating for, informing, and promoting all facets of New Jersey Agriculture. The Farm Bureau offers legislative and policy information, emergency alerts, and the latest news to farmers across the state, including beginner farmers through the New Jersey Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture website is a resource for consumers, farmers/producers, food industry buyers, teachers, students, and Future Farmers of America members. This website includes information on all things "Jersey Fresh", including hot topics, press releases, financial services, and applications/forms. Beginner farmers can learn more about state policies and regulations by visiting this website.

The Morris County Board of Agriculture dates back to the early 1900s and is composed of farmers, farming professionals and representatives from the NJ Farm Bureau, Rutgers University Co-op Extension, the State Board of Agriculture and other agriculture organizations. The Board of Agriculture serves as the county component of the NJ Farm Bureau and its headquarters is located at 25 Hillside Avenue in Mount Olive.

The County College of Morris is another stakeholder in the development of the County's agricultural economy. The community college has its main campus in Randolph and offers associate degrees in agribusiness. Visit www.ccm.edu/academics/divdep/health-professions-natural-sciences/departments-of-landscape-and-horticultural-technology-old/agribusiness/ for more information.

Visit NJ Farms is an initiative sponsored by Rutgers University, New Jersey Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, Inc. and the New Jersey Farm Bureau. The website features a robust directory of farm markets, nurseries/greenhouses, pick and cut Christmas tree farms, pick-your-own-farms, vineyards/wineries, and other farm activities throughout the entire state. The directory identifies seven farm operations within Morris County as of April 2021. See <https://www.visitnjfarms.com/> for more information.

Morris County's major private employers are in the industrial, healthcare, and business sectors. Picatinny Arsenal, Atlantic Health System, and Novartis are among of the top major private sector employment centers in the County. Other major employers include Bayer life sciences and ADP business services and Wyndham Worldwide hospitality,

according to Choose New Jersey. For more information, visit <https://www.choosenj.com/new-jerseys-assets/stats-and-facts/counties/morris-county/>.

Two Morris County municipalities have been identified by the NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) as having at least one census tract designated Opportunity Zone: Dover and Wharton Borough.

Farmer Support

The *New Jersey Land Link* Program serves as a referral center connecting farmers and landowner and also provides information and resources related to farming, leasing farmland, finding farmers/landowners, and developing farm transfer and succession plans. As of July 2021, the Land Link website is advertising two farming opportunities within Morris County: School Lunch Organic Farm in Hackettstown and the Totten Family Farm in Washington Township, both of which are seeking experienced farmers to help their operations. For more information, visit <http://www.njlandlink.org/>.

Marketing / Public Relation Support

The Morris County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB) maintains its website as an information clearinghouse to serve farmers in the County, keeping the page updated with valuable information regarding farmland preservation. The website also provides information to farmers such as the Renewable Energy Development Assistance Program and promoting events on VisitNJ.com. The MCADB is valuable to farmers in that it also aides in navigating interactions with the USDA, NRCS, and SADC.

The *Jersey Fresh* program promoted by the State of New Jersey has increased retail opportunities for vegetable and field crop growers across the state, which has proven beneficial in the long term due to the tendency of wholesale prices to fluctuate more frequently than retail prices. The *Jersey Fresh* website identifies one Morris County farm actively participating in the *Jersey Fresh* program as of July 2021: Happy Harvest Hydroponic Farms in Denville. Visit www.findjerseyfresh.com for more information.

Jersey Grown is a program promoted by the State and is a brand for locally grown plants, trees, shrubs and flowers, which certifies the item was grown in New Jersey. The *Jersey Grown* label certifies that the item is grown in New Jersey, so it is accustomed to the state's soil and growing conditions. The items are further checked for quality and are disease- and pest-free. Farms and farmers wishing to use the *Jersey Grown* label need to submit an application to the Department of Agriculture Division of Marketing and Development. For more information, please visit: <https://nj.gov/agriculture/jerseygrown/>

The Morris County Tourism Bureau is a valuable resource for the County's municipalities to utilize in their agricultural industry retention, expansion and recruitment efforts. The website features an expansive directory of wineries, trails, dining, nightlife, hotels and other attractions within the County. The Morris County Tourism Bureau website advertises the following Morris County farms:

- Alstede Farms in Chester Township
- Ashley Farms in Mount Olive
- Fosterfields Living Historical Farm in Morris Township
- Ort Farms in Washington Township
- Riamede Farm in Chester Township
- Stony Hill Farms in Chester Township
- Totten Family Farm in Washington Township
- Wightman Farms in Morristown

There are likely additional farms that provide direct marketing to customers within Morris County. It is recommended that the County provide outreach to the farms and farmers to encourage them to register their operations with the Morris County Tourism Bureau.

For more information, see www.morristourism.org.

Community Farmers Markets

As identified on the Jersey Fresh website, there are currently eight farmers markets within or in close proximity to Morris County:

- **Morris Plains Farmers Market**
771 Speedwell Avenue, Morris Plains
- **Morris County Winter Farmer's Market**
24 Mills Street, Morristown
- **Morristown Farmers Market**
10 Wilmot Street, Morristown
- **Denville Farmers Market**
51 Bloomfield Avenue, Denville
- **Chester Farmers Market**
175 Main Street, Chester Borough
- **Madison Farmers Market**
49 Central Avenue Dodge Field, Madison
- **Boonton Farmers Market**
Upper Plane Street, Town of Boonton
- **Hopatcong Borough Farmers Market**
111 River Styx Road, Hopatcong

In addition to the above, the following farmers markets are also located within Morris County and are not listed on the *Jersey Fresh* website:

- **Chatham Borough**- Railroad Plaza South off Fairmont Avenue Train Station
- **East Hanover** - Lurker Park, 609 Ridgedale Avenue
- **Netcong** - Main Street and Route 46
- **Riverdale** - Glenburn Estate, 211 Hamburg Turnpike
- **Rockaway Township**- Rockaway Mall Farmers Market- Rockaway Townsquare

Morris County Tourism Bureau also advertises a number of Morris County farmers markets on their website. For more information, visit <https://www.morristourism.org/farmers-market-directory/>.

Community groups, farms and farmers within Morris County are encouraged to register their farmers markets on the *Jersey Fresh* website and with the Morris County Tourism Bureau.

Many farmers who attend markets are Certified Farmer Vendors in the WIC & Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) and members of the SNAP program may be eligible to use their Families First cards at certain participating farmers markets. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture and Department of Health and Senior Services collaborated to prepare “Chapter 24 and You: A Practical Guide to Selling Safely at Farmer’s Markets” as a guide for farmers in to ensuring prepared foods offered at farmers markets are safe and in compliance with the law. To review the guide, visit <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/pdf/chapter24guide.pdf>.

Community Supported Agriculture

There are currently three community supported agriculture (CSA) programs within or in close proximity to Morris County, as identified on the *Jersey Fresh* website as of July 2021:

- **Cerbo’s Garden Center**
440 Littleton Road, Parsippany-Troy Hills
- **Stony Hill Farms**

15 North Road, Chester Township

- **Alstede Farms**

1 Alstede Farms Lane, Chester Township

Morris County Tourism Bureau also advertises a number of CSA operations on their website. See www.morristourism.org/csa-morris-county-nj/ for more information.

According to the Morris County Tourism Bureau, the County has the following CSAs:

- **Alstede Farms**

1 Alstede Farms Lane, Chester Township

- **Wightman Farms**

1111 Mt Kemble Ave, Harding Township

- **Ort Farms**

25 Bartley Road, Washington Township

- **Stony Hill Farms**

15 North Road, Chester Township

- **Totten Family Farms**

442 Naughtright Road, Washington Township

- **Grow it Green-Morristown**

31 Hazel Street, Morristown

It is recommended that farms and farmers are encouraged to register their CSA on the *Jersey Fresh* website and also through the Morris County Tourism Bureau.

Pick-your-Own

According to the *Jersey Fresh* website as of July 2021, there are currently ten Morris County farms with on-farm markets offering pick-your-own produce:

- **Knothe's Farm:** Assorted fruits and Christmas trees
645 Millbrook Avenue, Randolph
- **Union Hill Farms:** Assorted fruits and flowers
25 Cooper Road, Denville
- **Sunhigh Orchards:** Assorted fruits and veggies (apples, nectarines, peaches, eggplants, peppers, tomatoes), flowers and pumpkins
19 Canfield Avenue, Randolph
- **Miller's Hill Farm:** Flowers and pumpkins
10 Combs Avenue, Randolph
- **Franz Fuertges Landscape and Nursery:** Strawberries
109 Ford Road, Denville
- **Stony Hill Farms:** Apples, strawberries, assorted vegetables, flowers, pumpkins
15 North Road, Chester Township
- **Hamilton Farms Greenhouses & Farm Market:** Assorted fruits, flowers and pumpkins
130 Old Denville Road, Boonton Township
- **Riamede Farm:** Apples, tomatoes, pumpkins
122 Oakdale Road, Chester Township
- **Parks Farms:** Assorted fruits, flowers and pumpkins
525 Route 24, Chester Borough
- **Alstede Farms:** Strawberries, blueberries, peaches, cut flowers, peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, apples, blackberries, raspberries, vegetables, gooseberries, currants, pumpkins, Indian corn

1 Alstede Farms Lane, Chester Township

Farms and farmers are encouraged to register their pick-your-own operations on the *Jersey Fresh* website. The County should also consider incorporating pick-your-own facilities in conjunction with the Morris County Tourism Bureau.

Agricultural Education and Market Research Coordination

New and emerging trends in agricultural markets and technologies require continual research and education as local farmers respond to ever changing opportunities. Morris County farmers are uniquely situated to capitalize on these niche markets. Education and market research are critical to not only maintain a healthy industry, but to ensure its growth into the future. In an increasingly competitive business climate, Morris County farmers must remain up to date on the latest technologies and trends. Many stakeholders across the business and institutional sectors are available to help Morris County farmers stay ahead of the curve when it comes to emerging trends and technologies in the agricultural market.

The Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) Cooperative Extension of Morris County offers a 4-H Youth Development Program, various commercial agriculture programs such as fruit and vegetable grower education and landscape and turf management, family and community health sciences programs, as well as the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Morris County. Visit <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/quickinfo.php?Morris> for more information.

The Youth Farm Stand Program, run by NJAES, provides educational and employment opportunities to high school youth. These selected youth sell New Jersey produce throughout the state and acquire hands-on agricultural work experiences aimed at developing citizenship skills. Visit <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/youth-farmstands/> for more information.

The Rutgers University Agricultural Experiment Station in Morristown offers a training program for agritourism development. The program assists farmers in establishing agritourism operations as a component to their existing farms. The program provides a number of fact sheets for farmers to use in developing their business strategies. For more information, see <https://agritourism.rutgers.edu/training/factsheets.html>.

North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development (North Jersey RC&D) is currently involved in a number of research efforts aimed at increasing the reach of Morris County agricultural products. The organization is currently engaged in projects related to on-farm soil health, renewable energy development, no-till and cover crop education, and river-friendly farms among others.

Business Stakeholders

Input Suppliers and Services

Morris County needs greater variety of agricultural services to lessen farmer's dependence on mail order supplies, which can be costly and unreliable. The following is a list of suppliers and services most often used by Morris County farmers:

- **Country Feed & Grain**
400 Union Avenue UNIT 4, Haskell
- **Crop Production Services,**
127 Perryville Road, Pittstown
- **D & R Equipment**
258 County Road 579, Ringoes
- **4-T's Farm Trailer Sales**
1 Stone Signpost Road, Flemington
- **Parker Landscaping Construction Inc.**

150 Allen Road #108, Basking Ridge

- **Penwell Mills**
448 Penwell Road, Port Murray
- **Tractor Supply Co.**
293 US-206 Unit 15a, Flanders

A full list of agriculture-related suppliers and services can be found in *Appendix B*.

Product Distributors and Processors

The following is a list of distributors and processors serving Morris County farms:

- **Livestock Coop Auction Market**
225 W Stiger Street, Hackettstown
- **Harkers Auction Co.**
391 Medford Lakes Road, Tabernacle
- **Helis Stock Farms**
2530 Monmouth Road, Jobstown
- **Norman Parker**
146 Jacobstown Cookstown Road Wrightstown
- **Sal's Farm**
27 Church Lane, Montville
- **Green Village Packing**
68 Britten Road, Green Village
- **Trenton Halal Packing Co**
610 Roebling Avenue, Trenton
- **Marcucci Meats**
1159 N Delsea Drive, Vineland
- **D & M Meat Products**
1301 20 Road, Newark

For a full list of product distributors and processors, see *Appendix B*.

Anticipated Agricultural Trends

Newly emerging boutique crops, such as herbs, greens, squash, peppers, eggplant, onion, and garlic are becoming more popular as farmers look to diversify, rotate soil uses and increase profit margins. Further, farmers may want to consider growing high value specialty crops for nearby urban markets to enhance the County's economic base. Farm-to-table restaurants are extremely popular in high-end areas, whereas it does not appear as though Morris County farmers have been successful in tapping into that niche market.

Among the trends witnessed across Morris County farms, the Board noted that the equine industry has become less active over the past few years.

Cannabis seems to be an emerging crop. Although cannabis is not permitted to be grown on preserved farms or on farmland assessed properties, the Board expressed concern that the law may be changed in the future to allow it.

There are a number of specialty farms and niche markets in the County. One of the preserved farms in Washington Township specializes in goat cheese and offers cheese making classes. Hobby farming operations, such as bee keeping/honey/wax, are also popular, and there are many other different types of hobby farming operations throughout the County.

Value-added, prepared food, and experiences on farms are going to become more prominent. With the prevalence of two income households and less time for meal preparation, greater emphasis is being placed on purchasing food/produce items that can be cooked and ready for dinner within 30 minutes.

Patrons of local farms can be exposed to and are often anticipating operations that include farm animals/petting zoos, and other types of agritourism operations.

The phasing in of state minimum wage increases over the next several years and tightening restrictions at the federal level will likely impact farming operations in Morris County.

Impacts of COVID-19 on the Agricultural Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has several implications for the County's agricultural industry and economic viability. Many farm markets throughout the state closed in 2020 as a result of the increased expenses required to accommodate changing trends. Compounded by the diminishing federal budget for the agricultural industry, it is a possibility that a number of small farmers markets may remain closed indefinitely.

Additional challenges farmers face include meeting the safety needs of market customers and transitioning to electronic payment systems in order to reduce contact with cash. Farmers also have difficulty finding farm labor to assist with daily farming activities. As a result of COVID-19 protocols, equipment suppliers and service providers are not as readily accessible as they once were.

Moving forward post-COVID, the County will need to find new ways to help farmers adapt to changing circumstances in order to remain competitive. With support from the County, farmers can take a cooperative approach to modernizing certain aspects of their businesses, such as expanding online sales, taking credit card and electronic payment methods, and establishing appointment-based or communal pickup and distribution models.

The U.S. Farm Service Agency offers three programs aimed at lessening the impacts of COVID on farmers: the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, Pandemic Assistance for Producers, and Outreach Cooperative Agreements. For more information, see <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/New-Jersey/index#CFAP>.

Market Location

Morris County has the geographic advantage of access to markets in New York and Pennsylvania in addition to New Jersey. In particular, affluent consumers in the New York City and Philadelphia metropolitan areas, and wealthy New Jersey municipalities, are increasingly interested in new farm-to-table concept restaurants. Morris County farmers are poised to provide agricultural products to an increasingly health conscious, wealthy consumer base that spreads far beyond the County.

Product Demand

Over the past 30 years, Morris County producers have witnessed a steady decline in the market demand of dairy cattle, while that of beef cattle has experienced more fluctuations. The overall demand for cattle and calves, although depleting, remains higher than smaller livestock animals such as hogs and pigs or sheep and lambs. Market demand for egg chickens has remained consistently high and has continued to grow each year since 2007. From a horticulture standpoint, hay and grain remain the County's most profitable field crops, followed closely behind by vegetables for sale. In recent years, Morris County farmers have chosen to focus the majority of their efforts on nursery products that are in great demand, are easily marketed to the public, and have a great rate of return on a per acre basis.

Sustainability and Resiliency

As mentioned in Section III of this document, the County's 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies many hazards which can have an impact on the agricultural community within Morris County. Hazards such as droughts, floods, infestation, severe weather, and wildfires can be detrimental to the farming community.

While preparing the update of this Plan, Hurricane Ida swept through Morris County, resulting in rising flood waters, downed wires, road closures, wind damage, and fallen trees. It is likely many farmers suffered crop damages and/or other types of losses due to this weather event.

In addition, advances in technology within the farming community can also help mitigate the effects of climate change and global warming. While still in beta mode and not available to purchase, electric farm equipment is an up-and-coming sector of the industry. Further, land management practices, such as the incorporation of regenerative farming practices into land management strategies, can also help increase crop yields, reduce the use of natural resources (fossil fuels/water), and support the use of land as a “carbon sink” by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil.

Agricultural Support Needs

Funding to preserve farming is the primary resource needed to help make positive changes for agriculture in Morris County. Without a strong agricultural land base, the viability of farming is questionable. As more land is lost to development, preservation opportunities are quickly diminishing. Other valuable resources for Morris County farmers include an adequate farm labor source, updated equipment, the ability to get parts and expertise to repair the machinery, water for irrigation and individuals with the expertise to assist new farmers. The farming community also needs support state representatives to support farm legislation, i.e. provisions for a reduction in the cost for electricity used for farming and fuel for growing and transporting produce.

Agricultural Facilities and Infrastructure

Morris County’s food processing facility is P.L. Thomas & Company located in Morristown. The facility specializes in canning, condiment and sauce manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and food products wholesale and manufacturers. After processing, Morris County agricultural products are shipped throughout the region, but many stay local. Through partnerships with restaurants, Morris County farmers can increase exposure to consumers and highlight the use of fresh, locally grown products. By selling their products in close proximity to the agricultural operations, farmers can reduce the costs of transporting these goods and reduce their overhead, while the consumer is assured that the product is fresh and has been exposed to minimal processing and handling. A great deal of the agricultural products from Morris County farms end up being sold in one of the many on-farm markets or community farmers markets throughout the County.

For a full list of food markets and processing facilities serving Morris County farmers, see *Appendix B*.

Flexible Land Use Regulations

The MCADB continues to make itself available to Morris County municipalities in terms of resources and guidance for best management practices. Morris County municipalities have a wealth of tools at their disposal to help protect the viability of Morris County agricultural products, such as Right-to-Farm ordinances, accommodations for agricultural vehicle movement, and provisions for agriculture in municipal master plans and zoning ordinances.

In addition to the above-mentioned policies, Morris County municipalities with agricultural operations would benefit from facilitating renewable energy development on local preserved and unpreserved farms.

Agricultural Representation in Economic Development Organizations

There are three main economic development entities in Morris County that work towards uplifting Morris County farms to the national stage: the Morris County Tourism Bureau, the Morris County Chamber of Commerce and the Morris County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC). Each of these groups work independently and collaboratively to attract and expand Morris County agricultural operations.

As discussed earlier in this section, Morris County agriculture gets a great deal of recognition from the Morris County Tourism Bureau. The Bureau keeps their website updated with a running list of Morris County farms, providing links to special programs and events for each farm.

The Morris County Chamber of Commerce is another economic development entity aiming to prop up Morris County farms. Alstede Farms is the sole member-farm advertised on the website; however, all Morris County farmers are entitled to membership, which as advertised on the Chamber's website, and comes with access to exclusive member-to-member deals.

The Morris County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) is a 501(c)6 organization resulting from a partnership between the County Commissioners and Chamber of Commerce. MCEDC serves as a business association for Morris County businesses, many of which are leaders in the industries of life sciences, technology, transportation and logistics, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, and aerospace and defense.

Agricultural Support Implementation

As farmers continue to look for ways to reinvent themselves and their products, and to explore new markets and new methods for promoting their businesses, it is important that the County continues to develop new ways to help farmers increase their profitability and coordinate with federal, state and county agencies and other organizations, both in the public and private sector to find solutions. These may include workshops, newsletters and other opportunities for farmers to continue to educate themselves about:

- Better ways to manage their farm as a business;
- Emerging trends in agriculture;
- Ways to diversify, add value and maximize profitability;
- Technical advice and assistance with choosing and marketing their products;
- Advances in technology that may help them farm more efficiently and productively;
- Grants to assist in facility and technology upgrades;
- Agri-tourism opportunities with nexus to their production; and,
- More resilient breeds of crops to keep up with changing environmental conditions.

As the produce sector continues to grow in Morris County, and with the increased interest by consumers in organic produce and animal products, Morris County farmers may be encouraged to expand or diversify into this sector. As a result, the County may look to:

- Improve marketing of organic and natural produce;
- Explore various additional markets, including local restaurants and grocery markets and cooperative farm stands at municipal and county events;
- Explore the feasibility of establishing licensed food preparation facilities and meat processors in the County to facilitate growth of value-added products in this sector;
- Promote agritourism for organic and natural farm stands;
- Capitalize on growing trends in organic products as noted by Rutgers University Agricultural Experimental Station;
- Educate growers about organic and natural regulatory and certification requirements and about the availability of federal funds to help offset certification costs; and,
- Explore ways to support organic food growing and processing, such as assisting growers, with the help of the NJDA and the Rutgers Extension, to identify products that can benefit as organic (high value/high demand products).

Cost

Confronted with continual rising land prices, Morris County is always looking for ways to lower the costs of farmland preservation. Fortunately, Morris County has a well-funded farmland preservation program. The most effective method to reduce costs to date has been to encourage applicants to either donate a portion of the land to be preserved, or to accept a lower price than the certified market value. This benefits the Program by maximizing available funds while also providing the landowner with significant tax benefits. Should funding become an issue for

the County, the County may consider offering farmers the option to receive installment payments, rather than a lump sum.

Funding Opportunities

Farmland preservation is funded primarily through the Morris County Open Space Trust Fund, State Agriculture Development Committee programs, soil and water conservation grants and federal programs like the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (formerly the Wetlands Reserve Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program).

Timeline

In recent years, the Morris County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB) has increased its efforts to aide farmers in maintaining an economic presence in the County. As discussed earlier, the Board's website serves as an information clearinghouse for farmers and helps them to navigate the various programs and entities involved in the agricultural economy. MCADB continues to work towards building closer relationships with corporations, tourism boards, local economic development boards, and communities; these efforts are inherently long-term.